



POETRY

All Who Listen Are As Children Rithia McGlaun Mercer University	2
Organdy Blue Denim Betty Daniel Queens College	2
The Fishermen of Palamos	3
The End of the World Obliques, Arcs and Counterpoints Daisy Aldan New York University	4
Poems Louise Efird Woman's College	9
Riverside Wife Heather Ross Miller Woman's College	11
Hymn to Hecate's Apostles Joe Brown McKinney Woman's College	12
Bone-Kin Jane Gentry Hollins College	13
Epiphany Martha Alice Miles Woman's College	15

Spring at the Zoo Some Birds and a Radiant Tree Sylvia Spencer New York University	15
Stepmothers Die in Winter Dreams Anne Eddy Woman's College	16 17
Ex Cathedra Robert Harson Wagner College	18

FICTION

A Compromising First Symphony Deane Hall University of Virginia	6
Ma Pendry Sylvia Wilkinson Woman's College	19

ART

And That Was All Pat Borden	5
Birds Phyllis Taylor	9
Black Sambo Phyllis Taylor	10
Figure Drawing Phyllis Taylor	13
Job Nancy Estes	14
Windsweep Lealan Nunn	16
Woodcut Sylvia Wilkinson	25

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All Who Listen Are As Children

They asked me if I loved you and I could not say
Distrusting Symbols — Regicides of April, eighty-year Physicians

One leaf

Brought home at supper-time to prove a season moves
Is but a paltry ghost to haunt the caves
And all who listen are as children,
Untravelled and dream eaten.

I would not tell my love in syllables
With matronly precision, drawn closer to a fire.

RETHA MCGLAUN
Mercer University

Organdy

Pulling clover chains over rickrack braids,
She hopscoatched with Miss Muffet, Pandora,
And washed her chocolate-covered smile with hosepipe water.
Morning-glory vines were the Beanstalk,
And Negro Sam, Beauty's Beast,
Bewitched.
She climbed from a woodpile, a window sill,
To sit in her shingled playhouse tower,
And watched Lizzie, the spinster landlady,
Gossiping with her only boarder.
When he left, she taunted Lizzie: "You've lost your little man!"
But receiving no reply,
She twisted like a tomboy tyrant,
Yet clutched her doll with sissy apprehension.
On pleated lace she slid to the ground
To ride piggyback on Papa;
And twitching petals from a daisy,
Hummed "*He loves me, he loves me not . . .*"

BETTY DANIEL
Queens College

Blue Denim

Scuffling stones with half-back toes, he caught a poplar leaf —
A pagan coin,
King's ransom for Cinderella,
And fought a dragon tree with an orange-crate sword.
Cushioned on quilt patches, he doubled on his knees
Near a Negro witch grave,
But forgot his Sunday-school prayers
At the place of purple slave massacres.
In his prosperous pocket, he found an oak acorn pipe
Filled with dry muscadine seeds,
And sucked it till it slipped
When he cried his orders at the regimented geese.
He chewed a green persimmon,
Yet whisked away resultant tears
When seen by curious chipmunk eyes.
In scavenger springtime, he found a four-leaf clover
Which he tucked away for Monday luck,
And tucked it into the popping corn.

BETTY DANIEL
Queens College

The Fishermen of Palamos

(Costa Brava)

1. The black nets

El Grecoesque, long as dark veiled spirits, the black nets
lie drying on beige twilight beaches — or in the hands
of fishermen of Palamos and their wives, weaving repairs
as innocently geometric as spiders weave webs;
and as spiders, obsessed, the men cling to their black nets:

cradle, curtain, treasure, burden, trap and sail. On ships, black nets
hang obliquely, or swing in a wind; or hurled
overboard by arcs of arms, in seas they search and sway,
and heavy with miracles, at dawn or dusk, they are hauled
aboard. Then midescence surges from the black nets.

No doubt, at the end of the long voyage, the coffins
of the brave mariners of Palamos are draped in black nets
as flags drape those of glorious warriors,
and they swing into heaven in their black webbed hammocks,
for surely, heaven is peopled with Catalan fishermen
wearing haloes, robes and wings woven of black nets.

2.

In their cubicles, the old men scratch themselves and prepare for the voyage
night and the lighting of the *lamparas*
false moons gracefully trailing lures
the silver crescent rocks — a poor rival
one bright low-hanging star

The *lamparas* — *Dolores, Carmen, Amalia*, move toward the open sea
to the flamenco beat of chugging motors
laughter and drumming on decks
silhouetted hands keeping the time — singing — *Aiii cecccc*
heartbeat awaits the dark adventure

The *Questionmark*. The nightly dream surges in the breach of sky and water
— winged iridescent giants in the net
numberless spoils sliding into neat crates
silvery smiling *sardinas, bokeronas*
the slippery *calamar, merlusa*

At the ritual of the lighting of the *lamparas*, we take a wish:
Watch over the old men with seamed faces
preserved by the sea and their expectation
They carry the infinite within them
Keep them safe, and let their black nets billow

DAISY ADAM
New York University

The End of the World

—"I did not

Force you to retrieve my glove from the arena of wild beasts."

—"Nor did I fling it in your face.

I am no Saint; nor will I suck the sores of lepers.

I am merely saying: — Yes! Yes! Yes!

As a Gladiator says yes when he charges."

Then suddenly you turned black

And came from Brazzaville, and spoke a tribal language;

You wore a straw-lace tarbush,

And were wound in a fabric with spread-winged birds poised for flight;

You carried your own pillows and rugs:

Suddenly I grasped, you were fighting for your independence.

Wild tempestuous wind in the pines! Robert was right when he said,

—"July 14th the world will end.

We are doomed. The sea will envelop the shore like wrinkled old age."

French flags were madly flapping;

A hundred thousand birds were chattering wildly and screaming.

I grabbed my diaries and pencils —

Fled, and became the ornate clock staring down at empty Gare D'Orsay.

DAISY ALDAN

New York University

Obliques, Ares and Counterpoints

The bull is charging a horse with a man mounted. His tail
shoots skyward like a fakir's rope. The picador's pic
is as taut as the tail, making two obliques. The matador
is dragging the majenta cape in the golden sand

He swings the whispering muleta in a bow for which
he is the arrow; or a giant winged mollusc in flight
Pawing the ground, the bull sways his head in an arc. Pointed
balanced crescents, the golden horns of the bull
(the arcs visible and invisible)

Gracefully angular the prancing rear legs of the horses
who sway their heads in counter-curve to the bull, the thin
tensed legs of the heaving bull are spread: his flanks silken black
and shiny as the streaming silk sienna scarf of blood
along his firm side. The legs of the torador
in fifth position, his trousers tight around his thighs
Both are adorned in light — *el vestido de luz*
(elegance, temerity, violence, grace)

A soaring moment caught in a timelessness
Everything is raised, tensed in rearing; motion
upward: sword, arms, eyes, the forward thrust of heads

before the descending plunge precipitates the looseness
of all endings: writhing muscles of flanks slackened
legs tottering, skin sagging, tail limp as wet hair, tongue
hanging loose and curling, sightless yellowed eyes
the pitch down

DAISY ALDAN

New York University



AND THAT WAS ALL

Woodcut

Pat Borden

A COMPROMISING FIRST SYMPHONY

by Deane Hall

University of Virginia

I have recently been reading the work of a very close friend of mine who is by profession a music critic. Over the years I have come to respect and to be attentive to what he has had to say about the experience which is music. My friend has a following of others besides myself; in point of fact, his following is exceptionally large, for he is generally considered to be the most eminent living music critic. He is Sir Benjamin H. Haggin.

In his just published work on the first symphonic compositions of the so-called greats, he has made some interesting comments and observations which have brought to mind a first opus of a friend whom I knew at the University a few short years ago. Sir Benjamin was speaking of the Romantic composer Johannes Brahms when he noted that on listening at one time to his Opus 68: *I was suddenly aware of hearing not real creative activity but the pretense, the pose of such activity—the pretense of feeling in synthetically contrived themes that were being manipulated by formula to fill out the pattern of the movements. There was the impression that this was the activity of people, the orchestra, under a spell continuing to go through a long-established ritual that was without reality or meaning. The symphony went through the noisy motions of saving something portentous that really said absolutely nothing; and in it there was always the conscious aspiration to something for which there is no poetic impulse, the striving for something that must be unstriven for.*

What Sir Benjamin has written could, I think, bear relevance to a first opus of many a young man in a position similar in one way or another to that of my friend Philip Ormsby-Gore. But to clarify this, let me go on with Philip's experience and the events related to it:

A bright neon light flashed on and off out the window of Butch's Burger Place, reflecting its red rays on the scores of grease droplets which were beginning to run together and then off the hump slice of cheese on the open cheeseburger which had just been served. The white paper plate on the pink formica table top began to change its color as the grease slowly dripped onto it and was absorbed.

Philip was sitting with his arms folded and his elbows resting solidly on one edge of the table. His blue eyes seemed to be penetrating the cheeseburger before him. He was not talking—it was as though his mind were in some far off place. It was off, but not too far off. Opposite him sat a very attractive young lady, his date for the evening, Allison Tyler. She was too busy eating her sandwich, which was serving as her dinner, to notice Phil. It was nine o'clock and Allison had just gotten into town.

Phil looked up slowly and said, "Quite a phenomenon, isn't it, Ally?"

"What?"

"The cheeseburger. It's practically raining grease."

"Oh, yes. The best from Butch's Burger Place, I suppose."

"We just call it The Burg. Wouldn't want the place to sound too pretentious to outsiders." He put some catsup on the cheeseburger, closed it, and took a bite. "It lacks something. I couldn't possibly imagine what."

"An exotic French sauce could do wonders with it, I'll bet."

"You're right. I'll call Henri at Tour d'Argent and have him send me something for greasy cheeseburgers. Speaking of which, you know I haven't seen Lucy since the first of last year, is it? It was the first week in August when I visited her."

"I remember you were coming. I was there for several days before you came. I had to leave to get back to school. She was so discouraged; she'd been trying to get us together for some time. Now it's finally worked out, but too

bad Lucy couldn't be here too."

"Um-hum. She's doing something in New York this weekend. Were you studying in Florence or just visiting?"

"I was studying art history there and living with some friends of the family who have a house just out of town."

"Must have been nice."

"No doubt of that. Were you just travelling?"

"I'd made the 'grand tour' before. No, I was just making my friends think I was a little out of my mind. I went up to Davos from Antibes and stayed in a small pension run by some nuns from the convent to which it's attached. I was there for several weeks just enjoying the beauty of the Alps. I'd go out on long walks through the alpine meadows, up into hidden valleys, and sometimes, with a guide, to the summits of nearby peaks. It was really a wonderful experience. Even when the weather was bad and the clouds closed in, there was something stirring in the majesty of the mountains. Well, after those weeks, I went on to Berlin for ten days. I'd studied there the summer before and really fell in love with the city and its people. From there I flew to London for some theatre there and at Stratford and also to buy books. London was my last fascinating place."

"I've always wanted to visit Berlin. It really must be a stop before home."

"For the tourist I suppose it holds a strange interest, but I've lived there. It means something to me which is hard to communicate to those who have not really understood what Berlin has been and is today. Oh, well. Enough of that. You ready?"

"Yes, thank you."

"We might as well go on to the party. Things should be beginning to liven up at the house about now."

Well, so far, we have no *pretense of feeling* and no *contrived themes*. That was not Phil's way, nor was it Allison's. However, at the fraternity party comes the beginning of a *long-established ritual . . . without reality or meaning*. The symphony is beginning: Phil will begin to squeeze into the mold of the movements of his own volition for reasons which he and Bill Moncure will mention shortly.

"Hey, Orms, come on over," called Bill Moncure standing in the front hall of the fraternity house with Mark Chatham and both of their dates. "This is Philip Ormsby-Gore, Orms for short. My date Trudy Parker and Nancy Commelin." Phil then introduced Allison to the four.

"Let's get you and Allison a little something to drink, Orms," said Bill.

Phil asked, "What would you like, Ally?"

"Nothing for me."

"Sure? Not even a coke?"

"No thanks, not now, Philip."

"Take care of the girls for a minute, Tex. We'll be right back," said Bill.

"Better watch out that I don't take too good care of 'em. Get yourself some more, Nip. You got off to an awful slow start tonight." Mark called to Bill as he started to the bar with Phil.

"I guess I don't need to ask you where you're from, Mark," said Allison.

"Hell, no. To be a little more specific than we've been though, I'm from Houston. And you?"

"Boston."

Changing his expression, Mark noted, "Oh, one of those."

"You've really come up with a good looking date, Orms. She seems fine for a starter," said Bill. "Just remember we're gettin' on a new fall, and you know Tex and I are press-

ing our plans to get you out and be wilder and really have a good time. A great time. We start tonight, so let's not muffle the works."

Phil, standing at the bar, said, "Sure, Nip. I know. I'm as anxious to get going as you and Marker are to start me. We'll make it *together*."

"O.K. Great. Tex and I are drinking Black and White. Have a little of ours to start the night off."

"Thanks just the same, Nip. I've got a fifth of Cutty I might as well open now."

"Right. Doesn't matter what you get going on, just *keep* going." The two poured their drinks and returned to the front hall.

The party moves on, the beat becomes more deliberate, voices grow louder, but some, in darker corners, soften. While Mark attaches himself to Allison for a short time, his date Nancy Commelin starts talking to Phil, who is on his third drink, still Cutty Sark, not Mark's and Bill's Black and White.

"Haven't seen you here when I've been up with Mark before. Where you been?"

"Oh, just been back in the cobwebs of the storerooms of this human museum. The curators are just in the process of bringing me out."

"Yes? I've always like museums too, but I've never worked in one before. What do you collect?"

"Dust, depression, loneliness. You ought to try it some day—it does things to you."

"Come on now. I was being serious."

"So was I, but I'm not supposed to be," said Phil smiling. "Did you have a good summer? Do anything interesting?"

"What do you mean 'not supposed to be serious'?" asked Nancy. "I think a guy who's got his serious side, who can really talk about things, use his mind, is really great. I mean he's the kind you can count on always, or nearly always. You know, he's got something to give that has something to it."

"Sure."

"Oh! Maybe I see. You can talk about, say, Beethoven and Brahms, or Raphael and Michelangelo? Well, that's fine. What do you have to say?"

"Nancy, you don't want me to sit down and discuss the iconography of the *Disputa*, do you?"

"Dispute what?"

"Yeah, the combo's a little loud. This isn't the place to analyze the art world."

"You're goddamn right it isn't," said Mark as he grabbed Phil by the arm. "Come on, Nancy. We've got to get this stiff to twist. Here's another drink, Orms. Let's go."

"Just a minute."

"It's not my Black and White. I got *your* bottle."

"O.K. And where is Ally?"

"Off knocking around with Nip somewhere. This way!"

"All right, all right."

"Now, Orms boy, this is that second movement you've always heard about. Watch. Sort of like drying your ass with a towel. See?"

"Un-luh."

"Slowly at first. Come on, now you . . ."

Mark started Phil off being manipulated by the formula. Before long, under the watchful tutelage of his course marker, Phil became quite good. He even took on Nancy, who was in Mark's words a "mean twister." There was the *conscious aspiration to something for which there was no poetic impulse*. Phil liked it though—he saw he was really on his way. It gave him a good feeling and brought Mark and Bill a little bit closer in rapport.

"Orms, you're really going at it, man. Do some mean work now to show Ally what you can do. Hey, that's it! What do ya think of that, Ally?" Bill asked. The two had just come into the room.

Phil suddenly stopped. "Hell, that's enough to do me in for tonight. I need another drink. We can go sit and talk in the bar, Ally. Come on." Phil and Allison left for the bar to continue their conversation.

"Well, Nip, how do you think we're coming?" asked Mark quietly to Bill.

"You're doing a damn good job with him. He's feeling no pain, but he isn't drunk."

"Yet," added Mark. "Orms is really gettin' his kicks tonight. Glad he's pulled through like this."

"Say, have you told the guys to come on out to our place after here, Tex?"

"I've told some of 'em. Is Ally gonna come out with Orms?"

"Don't think so, Tex. Just as well too. I don't quite get that girl—her current seems like it's going the other way."

Phil and Allison were seated side by side on one of the sofas in the room with the bar. Phil had gotten another drink, it was about his seventh of the evening. The time was 12:15. The room was nearly empty, for many of the parties had left. The two talked earnestly together, almost in undercurrents.

"Ally, I don't see what you don't like about Nip and Mark. Unh, they're both, you know, really great guys. None better. I didn't really get to know 'em till the end of last year. I haven't got any better friends than them. We got this neat place in the country to live this year. God, they've really helped me a lot. I'd still be, well, sittin' between dust and the depression and alone if it weren't for them."

"You just don't see it very clearly, do you, Philip? I wouldn't know whether or not to trust either of those two at any given moment. No telling what they might say to me."

"Look, Ally. You just got to get used to them. Sure they make up stories. It's just party talk—something to have a li'l fun with. What do you want? You can always count on them when you have to."

"I'd just rather not have to, that's all. Oh, that isn't all either. You've got so much more than they have. Why are you forcing yourself after them? It can do you no good."

"God! Look at me, Ally. I'm just damn sick and tired not having any fun down here. I work, and, well, I've got lots of activities. That just won't make up for no social life. I've gotta change to survive. I can't take dullness and the loneliness any more. I really like Bill and Mark, and they seem wanting enough to help me. If they *want* to, good God, I want them to. Besides I'm not really changing, just adding necessary trim to liven me up. Yeah, I can sit down and talk about art and music, or the political situation, or Europe, but where does that get me? Not out having fun with the guys. That's where I want to be more than any place else. If I can get out with Bill and Mark, and I can now, well then, I want to go out with them. I like 'em. They're my very best damn friends."

"Yes, Philip, I'm afraid of damn friends."

At that moment Mark stuck his head into the room. "Hey, Orms babe, come on we're going on out to the house now."

"Right. I'll drop Ally off at Mrs. Nutter's and come on out."

"You're not coming, Ally?"

"No. Nice to have met you Mark. I've really got to get to bed."

"You sure as hell do, baby," quipped Mark as he withdrew.

There was a long silence. Phil broke a little smile and looked over at Allison. They got up to go.

The third movement did not have to follow the second; the opus number one could have stopped. It did not, however, and in it was to be found *not real creative activity, but the pretense*. The themes were to be *contrived synthetically*. This "house in the country" was really more like a done-over and added to slaves' quarters. The main room was half-timbered and the ceiling beams were exposed. There was a narrow stairway leading to the garret bedroom and bath, there was a small bar and a hi-fi set under the steps, a stone fireplace and mantel, and a bear skin rug spread before the roaring fire, casting its light above the darkened interior. A small assortment of people, male and female, were scattered over the almost nondescript furniture of the small room. At two o'clock, about an hour and a half after the group had left the

Most were too drunk to be concerned with taking, drinking more, or dozing. The hi-fi left, romantic music, the kind you find on sale on the market. Bill and Mark still knew what was up for down—their Black and White still held out. Phil was taking up room which others thought they could have put to better use: he was stretched out by himself on the one sofa in the room, listening intently to the music. He had a drink in his hand, but was going slowly with it—it was not his time to pass the point of no return.

Bill opened the door from the back room, came through, and closed it behind him. He buttoned the button just below his collar and then the one below that. Mark was the only one who saw him. He left Nancy lying on the bear skin rug and went over to speak with Nip. The conversation was in whispers.

"Tex," said Bill, "go over and get Phil. I'll tell you when he comes." Phil came with Mark, and Bill then continued. "Chase passed out 'bout a half hour ago. His date's back on the sofa in the next room, and God is she a hot nympho if I ever saw one. Here's your chance Phil. She wants to do the trick." Bill and Mark both looked intently at Philip.

Mark reached into his back pocket. "Here take this, Orms boy. This won't be quite like the whore house we'd talked of startin' in, but you've got a good opportunity now."

"Yeah, I see."

"Aren't scared, are you?"

"No. Taken me a bit by surprise, but I'm ready."

"Don't forget to use it. Be careful, she can make you forget a lot," said Bill as Phil started for the door. Mark opened it for him and closed it after him. Bill and Mark gave each other reassuring grins.

The two went back to their dates and looked up only after twelve or so minutes when Phil came out. Phil smiled and winked at them. "Mission accomplished" flashed between their minds.

8

Shortly after 2:30 the small group of partiers began to leave. In some of the cases the girls drove, in others their dates still felt able to manipulate the road. By 2:40 only Phil was left with Bill and Mark and their dates, and after a few minutes of setting things straight, Bill went to take his date to the place she was staying. That left only three. Phil was again stretched out on the sofa listening to the music.

Mark and Nancy slowly worked their way up the narrow stairs. The trap door closed behind them. All was still except for the hi-fi which was playing some slow, sad western ballads and an occasional, very occasional creaking of the upstairs floor. Nearly half an hour passed in this way. Phil lay there listening, thinking, sipping slowly on what was left of his Cutty. He was sobering, and this had a tendency to make him more serious, more reflective than usual.

He could now hear movement above him, and he realized that they had finished. Chatham should not be horny any more for a while; Nancy would supposedly be happy or content or whatever she was.

Nancy came down the steps alone. She closed the trap as she came. Phil looked up as the record ended, and he could sense that all was *not* well, something was bothering the girl.

"You know, Phil, I've been thinking about what we said earlier, you know, about seriousness and all that."

"I remember. 'A guy who has the serious side, who uses his mind, is really great. The kind you can count on always.'"

"I was right, though I didn't believe it then. And you, Phil? You were wrong to want to change, I think. Now, that is, I hadn't seen Mark since last June until tonight. I thought it would be all the same. No, I even just said, 'You know, Mark Chatham, I'll bet you never had a serious thought in your life.' I felt like a child saying that. He doesn't even see it now, how what he answered? 'God no. What the hell'"

"I bet he wanted something more; you'd know what I mean and he'd say, 'Well, I'm going now.'"

"You'd like to drive you in, Nancy?"

"I would, Phil. I'll just take Mark's keys here and go

in myself, I'd rather. You can bring him in in the morning. Well, bye now. Remember, you've got my vote."

"Thanks, Nancy, but I'm afraid it won't ever win me an election."

Nancy went out, and Phil went over to put on another record. Something classical would be good he thought as he ran through his records. He came to the Brahms First Symphony and pulled it. The fourth movement, the finale, that would be good food for thought he imagined. Philip took the disc from its cover and put it on the turntable.

Phil was now under the spell and he would continue in all probability to go through the long-established ritual whether there was reality or meaning or *not*. Opus number one may now end. The finale is at hand, conducted in all or in part ostensibly by Philip's course marker, Chatham, but in reality by another force, neither understood nor recognized by the conductor we see before us.

Mark Chatham comes down the stairs ready for the movement. He wears a dark, patterned, long sleeve shirt open at the neck, a snug-fitting pair of off-white levis, his black Texas boots, worn and slightly caked with mud. On his head is a weathered hat, Texas style again. Mark's intense brown eyes are clearly visible despite the shadow cast across his face by his wide-brimmed hat. His taut, lean figure radiates an air of casual savoir-faire.

Phil placed the needle in the groove. The movement begins.

"Where the hell is that bitch?"

"She took your car and went on into town."

"Saves me some trouble," said Mark as he went to the bar, picked up his Black and White, and poured himself a drink. "Sounds like Nip's coming back. He's been a while."

"Yes he has, Mark."

Chatham walked over to the fireplace and leaned against it with one elbow on the mantel. The opposite foot he placed on top of the bear's head on the floor before the dying fire. Nip walked in. "Oh! You guys still up. Guess I might as well have a drink before bed." Nip drained the last bottle of Black and White. "All gone," he said, throwing the empty bottle into the trash can.

"What the hell's on the hi-fi?" asked Bill.

The choral motif was being intoned by trombones and bassoons.

"Last movement of the Brahms First Symphony."

The main theme of the movement followed immediately in the brass section.

"Guess we all got a little tonight. How'd you like it, Orms boy," asked Mark.

"I can take it as well as you guys can. It's supposed to be a pretty good thing to have your bedroom passport even if it is a little late in coming through, isn't it?"

"You're goddamn right, and it's about time too. You're going to be a new guy now. It'll really be great!" assured Mark.

"Yeah, but what's this certification supposed to mean? Am I — fully licensed? Does this mean I'm a qualified fornicator?"

"Mean? Mean? What's this all about? It means you're supposed to be a man now. That's what it means."

"Yeah. Well, see you *men* tomorrow." Phil went upstairs and closed the trap.

"God, I don't know if we're ever gonna really be able to do anything with that guy. Meaning? At least he's not a virgin any more."

"That's right, Tex. We've won so far. From here to the end we'll be completely triumphant, I'll bet."

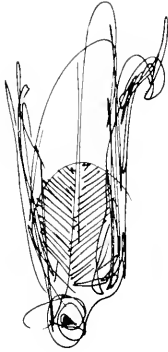
They finished their drinks and went up.

The symphony finished, but therein was no meaning. It strove for *something that must be unstriven for*, but then on the other hand *some* critics see this symphony as "meaningful, deep, and moving forward to a triumphant ending like its precursor in the same key by Beethoven, ending in the solid, uncompromising tonality of C major."

What would have been mine
 I gave to the sea
 who couched your loneliness
 granting a oneness
 denied by me

I tasted of brine
 from the mouth of the sea
 It dried on my tongue
 in crust
 You smelled the brine
 from the thighs of the sea
 and it answered your sense
 like musk
 From being to Being
 I saw you grow
 and lean to the lap of the sea
 one who loved you
 and let you in
 leaving her brine with me

LOUISE EFIRD
Woman's College

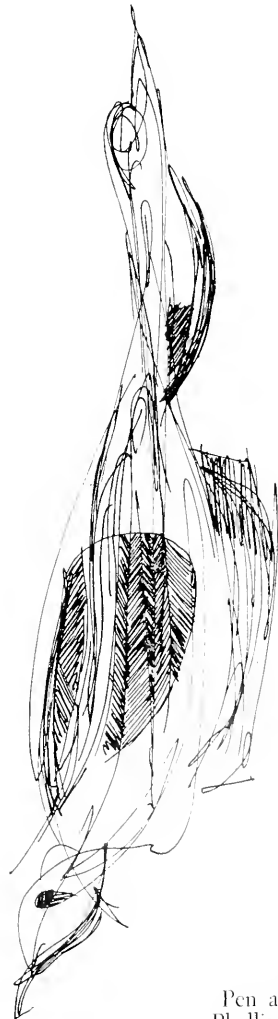


White dashes on the black asphalt begin to blur
 And soon become a line, indifferent
 Like a string held close to a mirror
 So that its image shows a ghost on the glass.
 The thin white streak keeps racing into me
 But always misses — behind reflecting
 Dismal, like a chalk mark, on and on.

Infinitesimal, rising, sinking,
 Infernal, growing, red, and blinking,
 A drumlight beating tin —
 An eye, even closed, unshrinking —
 Looms and compels my thinking
 Now to put the damned thing out.

The stitches on the road jerk taut and come unsewn.
 A bar of alternating black and white
 Slams itself across the line beside the light.
 The metallic bell's crescendo one time
 Mellows like a knell. Then
 The needle cry of tires blends
 With locomotive roar and mends
 The stitch in fading monotone.

LOUISE EFIRD
Woman's College



BIRDS
 Pen and Ink
 Phyllis Taylor



BLACK SAMBO

Painted
by Taylor

Riverside Wife

You come from a long house,
A long stone house of prayers,
River Sundays and muddy barefoot praise
Damned up the days
Of your summer riot.

I don't know that house.
My house was a windmill
Moss-stacked and tall,
A dim green glimmer in the heat.

We look in the book of your house.
The men and their women peel brownly,
And their legends stiffly crack.
You say:
 "Grandpa went round on Sunday mornings
 To every house,
 Knocked on its door with his big blue knife,
 And collected his nigger rent."

Your Grandpa wore several white beards,
Not one, but several,
Rippling across his old face, like frosty vines,
And your Grandma held a German silver purse,
A grey crushed mesh of vanity,
The cradle, church, and churn had left famine
Where there should have glowed memory.
She was more buttonhook than woman.

Grandma and Grandpa rose
To their river church on their river Sunday
In the green rush of a river-strangled May,
Then the hollow wives sat beside their strange mates,
And the ivy twined its starving toward God.

When they returned,
Stiff and hot in the new spring balm of Gilcad,
He was calm,
He picked up the poker
And struck her, the wife of his bosom,
Severely, methodically, without passion,
The black soot streaked her pale old-fashioned skin.
She put up her hands,
Like poor old ivory fans
Left over from a masquerade.
Then he left her by the best hearth,
Swept bare of fire,
In the stiff front room where a tall mantel clock ticked stupidly,
And the frozen stares of her children
Stared frozenly out of their heavy oak frames.

He went to his barn,
To his rope that he had thrown up
Over the loft beams
In the cool fluttering early morning.
The field lark sang,
The horses frisked,
Their big veins twitched with the blood-push.
He stood,
Still calm,
Oh, balm of Gilcad,
Sweet mint of my father,
Caress me.

You have said these gifts are mine:
The big blue knife, the stiff buttonhook,
Grey German silver, sweet balm of Gilcad,
But I say I don't know that house.
In the still early morning,
Let us flee,
Let us take the balm and steep it into sweet tea.
The book of my house is full of blank pages,
No green river riot rages
In the cool clover-white of my house.

When their Sunday is over,
And the muddy feet have stamped out the mounds of their praise,
We can walk on to higher grounds in warmer days,
Through the rank wild green,
Easy, quiet, faintly incarnadine.

Hymn To Hecate's Apostles

And so,
the flame greedily ate,
The smell of fired-flesh
spiraling up
From the gray-stoned
square of some forgotten,
Half-dusty, half-clean town.
Dogs barking
While the sparks multiplied
And the woman screamed —
eternally screamed —
And the pious thought it sport,
to watch the witch die . . .
To leave the square —
afterwards . . .
And hang clean, white aprons
on pegs —
Behind the doors.

And then,
Somewhere else,
in a shadowy place,
They drove the stake
deeply, slashingly
Into the blue-veined bosom.
Like a silver-sided fish,
up . . . down . . .
up . . . down . . .
Catching the light,
hypnotically gleaming
Each time the axe went
up . . . down . . .
Pious men,
in pious labor,
Pounding the witch's heart
Into black, fragrant earth.
Tomorrow —
chopping wood
with the same axe,
Sweating self-righteously.

Halloweens,
long ago,
I waited long hours
To see the witches,
Scudding across the moon . . .
Hoping to catch
The evil trumpet-tone
of their laughter . . .
Wanting to know
they were there.
But —
they never came . . .
they never came . . .
While I watched,
Waited —
But I felt them —
smelled their fragrance
Of black, flying skirts —
And lost caves —
And hideous fascination.

Today —
They have come;
Disguisedly:
Fine-nostriled noses,
Not hooked or warted.
And red-pointed nails.
Or else —
Clean, browned hands,
Motherly, competent,
Pillow-feathered bodies,
Sweetly legged
And limber —
Like delicate grass.
Cultivated skin,
China thin.

They have come,
And I know . . .
The laughter like dry leaves
Against the moon.
The fumes of black
When they move.
The ancient glitter
In new eyes.
Like the flames in the square,
The axe in the sun . . .
I know . . .
I know . . .
They must die.
By the axe —
By the flames —

Then, I turn,
Catching my mirrored shadow,
Seeing the cultivated skin
Of myself —
The small, red nails,
The body of myself,
Soft as grass
With blue-veined bosom . . .
And from the moon,
The witches ride,
And I am fascinated
By the sweet, dark power
In my blood,
Doomed to be as they . . .
Yet —
Knowing,
Always knowing . . .

JOE BROWN MCKINNEY
Woman's College

Bone-Kin

He lives in the old house all alone
With only his kin that are kin by bone,
Who rock with him at night, who feed
And crowd with him at
When dark creeps full the night,
To full-mooned corners of the room,
They would rush back to night,
But he's paid dear for air white,
For bone is thicker than blood.

He lives in the old house all alone,
With only his kin that are kin by bone,
So supplying for wife and mother
And having no need of any other
To help him heed the house-yawn creep,
And fight the heavy dust of sleep,
To push the hair-hung cobwebs back,
Or spray the marching bugs to black,
For bone is thicker than blood.

He lives in the old house all alone
With only his kin that are kin by bone,
And he's content as most, they say,
Touching his things with chores all day;
Loving the quilt of his mother's hand,
The horse-hair sofa, the shaving stand —
Where once he found a snake coiled back,
With stomach as white as the rest was black,
That marbled moment made it known:
Blood does run thick, almost, as bone.

JANE GENTRY
Hollins College



FIGURE
Pen and Ink
Phyllis Taylor



Epiphany

sunlight is writhing on the wind
and the trees will tremble against it
and the winds will cry into it
and the land will shudder under it

and away
far away
the willow girl hums her quiet song

she recalls the promises
promises made in nights longer ago
than childhood
she hums her vacant sound
and views the crippled sky

the world is dead
and she has grown too old
to cry

MARTHA ALICE MILLS
Woman's College

Spring At The Zoo

In the daffodil jungle
the honess
pretends to be her shadow.
In Kabuki mask
she dances for the eyes
of a small Japanese child
held up in a father's arms.

SYLVIA SPENCER
New York University

15

Some Birds And A Radiant Tree

Those lost flights
birds flown up from labyrinths
of soundless shape

those words
were not downed
or spun around

or spilled vermilion
where the gone are found

crystal flow of light
exploding tapestries
rained
ruin
on the
tones of love

and no leaf stirred
on the radiant tree.

SYLVIA SPENCER
New York University

its
 with ashes
 fires
 wind-soot,
 She told me the witches' tale —
 Of skinny fingers
 Brushed against tear-stained ovens.
 I hid behind the covers
 And shivered at her age-drugged whispers.

Grey grasslands
 Of winter
 Had the forest of gingerbread.
 Buried, they said —
 Stepmothers die in winter.

And from the long shadows
 Of snowy afternoons —
 To hunch beside ice-mirrors,
 To find shadow
 Cast from shadow

Earlier winter nights
 And the snow fell in deepening mounds
 Clouding the sound of her whispers.
 The heat of the gas-light,
 Held to watch
 Our good-night kiss,
 Licked the burning flesh
 Of many ovens.
 And whispers hovered over my bed

Too soon
 I woke
 Beside the night-lit fires,
 And shaking fingers
 That wiped burned kisses
 From my lips.

Then only
 To remember the snows,
 To hear them drone,
 Not long, not long —
 Stepmothers die in winter

ANNE EDDY
Woman's College



WINDSWEEP
 Collage
 Lealan Nunn

Summer froze the sky
In heat-clouds,
And drought-crops burned
In ash-talon marks on the dust.

An old woman quivered with dreams:
"Find the water-falls of green marshlands
And lovers who bathe their thighs with
river-berries."

In marsh-grass,
I once found a mud-yellow ditch
That spilled on hidden graves
Of no-name people.

ANNE EDDY
Woman's College



Dreams

In the still, grey hours
Before the storm,
Water-caverns burned
Into shadow —
As if grass-fires scorched
The mid-day dusk
In soundless flames,
Dried, dead things
Spattered the beach —
Victor or victim of some long-since game
That was only a game.

Sea-birds tumbled in crests
Over the tide:
Bird-shadow against wind-shadow
Until there was only the sea
Mirroring the sea.

Once
From some childless child-play,
I remember
They said there would be another deep wind
And blood-witched moon
Where the old ships would break
The sea at full tide.

And then to watch
Day after day
For the wind and tide
That would die into dusk-shadows
At mid-day —
To watch for the phantom ships
And sun-bleached pirate crew
Pacing in endless noon-dusk;
Ships and men buried now
In fading pictures above the neat fireplaces
Of dead widows,
Who bore children —
Who aged before the same fire
That mirrored the same shadow
Against the wall
Year after year —
Not old or young or anything,
Just a shadow against the wall.

But now
The wind meets the dusk
In shafts of dark,
And I know the ships will come
In silent bird-shadows;
I know the ships will come.

ANNE EDDY
Woman's College

Ex Cathedra

You know the obscence scrawling
 On the walls of my soul
 And have whispered hurried elegies
 Over mouthfuls of dirt:
 You knew the wild wounds
 Of my soldier scars
 When we celebrated the end
 Of an old war
 With tin cans and broken pillows.
 There were moons between us
 And afternoon hills,
 And once a tree
 That I can't find anymore
 Because they have taken the tree away
 Along with the hill.
 Once, we mourned together
 For a generation not our own,
 And for my sake you tried
 To call the flowers by name,
 Crawled tearless to an angry bed.
 Now there are other lives to live.
 You are still a priest without an altar
 Walking in a city of blue streets,
 And you think there are islands between us
 When there is really only sky.
 Because we waited for
 Something
 In the silence of a shabby room,
 And although the fashion
 Of this clever age condemns it,
 I breathe these words:
 Old friend,
 Time is between us
 And not against us.
 Although we hunt
 In different forests
 We walk on similar leaves
 Scorched to different colors
 By the same sun.
 I do not burn incense
 To shadowy gods
 In flickering temples
 Or light candles
 To undo the past.
 I am my own cathedral
 And strange saints
 Walk within me.

ROBERT HARRISON
Wagner College

The horse spring bubbled deep with fighting ripples teaming with salamanders. Beside the hole the rusty lid squirmed with dizzy gray bugs who rolled into balls as the sun hit them. Yellow-blue moths fell from the air, fluttered into the dark hole and left puffs of white dust on the side as they came to rest on the water. The salamander ripples rolled over them, wetting and breaking their wings. Then a dusty hand dipped into the ripples and lifted up a thin battered moth on one finger.

"Little Bud, you get away from there, son."

"Papa, gotta get the bugs out before the mules drink."

"Leave them bugs be, Little Bud, there's a million more to take their places." Then he paused and said, "... and eat the cabbage."

Little Bud stood up and wiped his hand on the seat of his jeans and thumped sand over the edge of the spring with his toes. "Want me to get them lizards out Papa,"

Papa was snapping the reins loose from the mule's bits as they thrust their noses on top of the water and began drinking noislessly. Their harnesses jingled as Papa raised their snorting and foaming noses from the water.

"Bad luck to fish them out Little Bud, spring'll run dry every time."

Little Bud picked the tattered blue moths off of the mule's noses and said, "Water kilt them, Papa."

"Kill anything what ain't learned to drink slow in the heat. Old John here knows," as he slapped the mule's sweaty neck. But Maude there'll drink till she gets the heaves; got a bull's head," as he tugged at her bridle until he lifted her nose from the water. As John slowly lowered her head and rested his nose on the water, Papa said, "Don't find many like John, thirty if he's a day."

"Older than you, Papa?"

"No son, Papa's a mite older," and he wiped his straw mustache on his sleeve and squinted at the glaring white and green fields. "Days like this will make an old man of you," he continued as he turned his sun-scorched neck towards Little Bud. The skin at his throat fell in creases but his face was stretched tight over pointed cheek bones. His blue eyes lay deep in their sockets beneath his yellow brows and his mouth dropped downward as he talked.

"Gonna rain, too stinking hot not to let loose soon." Looking up at the black-bottomed clouds he said, "Come on son, gotta get in your acre before rain hits." As Little Bud climbed into the tobacco sled, he stopped to listen for the plunk, plunk of the gray bugs as Papa slid the cover back over the spring and the snap of the reins back into the bits.

Then Little Bud walked to the front of the sled and gathered up the reins. "Glce, John, glce," and he and the mule scraped away down the path. "I'll pick up my load and meet you at the barn, Papa," and his voice trailed off as Papa watched him head down the main road.

He picked up Maude's reins and walked beside the sled as she dug it down the path. His feet dragged over the top of the ground turning up dry clumps of grass as he moved. The sun began to filter through the trees and clouds, finally spurted out and enveloping Papa and Maude as they walked into the main road.

His eyes squinted and two wrinkles fell into the tight face between his eyebrows as he looked across the fields. Negro heads bobbed up and down among the green stalks and melted together as the sweat ran into Papa's eyes. Their voices and singing muffled into an uneasy roar as Papa closed his eyes and wiped them on his sleeve. He dropped Maude's reins and she stood shuffling her feet in the dust as he sat down beside the road. He slowly opened his eyes but closed them tightly again as the colors and objects blurred before them. He could only hear the trembling buzz of the flies that dived around him until a voice called out.

"Bud, you sick," and a truck pulled up beside Papa.

As Papa looked up, the truck's headlights tipped into focus. He batted his eyes and said, "No, son, no, I ain't sick, you won't see the day I'll let the boat top me." As he climbed to his feet he said, "A man need a hot meal in the middle of the day. Package lunch don't stick to your ribs. I reckon Mama has enough cooked up at the house."

Then the man in the truck waved and the truck jerked forward with sand grating in its parts as his foot slid off the clutch. Papa watched him bounce down the road and waved at the little Negroes in the back huddled against the cab. Then he picked up Maude's reins and followed the truck tracks on the ground on the way to the house. He walked away from Maude as she stopped under the persimmon tree. Her skin rippled and her tail swung around her flanks and thumped against the sled. Papa stopped and turned, seeing her feet lift up and down in the rotten persimmons as the flies and yellow-jackets darted around her legs. "Come on Maude," and he pulled her up in front of the porch where she snorted and dropped her head, her eyelids sliding shut.

He stood on the steps and called, "Mama, you got any cabbage or something cooked up?"

The house began to shake and the shade on the floor lamp rattled against the globe as Ma Pendry moved towards the door. She swung the screen open and leaned against the frame as it shut against her side.

"Sakes Mama, you walk the heaviest of any woman I ever seen." Then he paused and said, "I was wondering did you have anything cooked up?"

"Bowl of squash and some fat back on the table. Did you finish the north side?"

Papa looked at the floor at her feet and said, "Nope, too hot to work fast, hoping a rain will hit before smst. Besides I ain't got enough niggers to work it. Seen Craven with a load of them."

"Pshaw, I seen them too, them little old bitty niggers from Sarks Grove—don't get a day's work from them in a week." Then she looked down the road across the railroad tracks and saw the bus pull to a stop. She stood motionless until she saw two Negro children scamper out and an old colored woman bang her hips from side to side down the steps and clutch the door as she edged to the ground. Ma Pendry looked back as the bus door creaked shut and said to Papa, "The boys oughta be home soon. I s'pect them any day now to help get the crops in." Disappointment covered her face as she watched the bus pull off and the children run up the road with the old woman waddling in the dust behind them.

"Not till the fighting's over they won't be home. We need some niggers. I don't look for the boys 'fore winter."

"Pshaw, boys will be home soon. Ain't never stayed gone long enough to look no different. If you'd make them niggers work we'd get it in. If I didn't have all this canning to do I'd show them how to get it sorted and in, don't nobody have to be that slow." Then she turned and snatched her apron off the screen. "Prime them leaves so slow the row'll be cured in the field 'fore they get to the end." As the house shook and the lamp rattled she called from the kitchen, "Wash up!" Papa walked to the hand pump and stuck his head under and rubbed one hand through his yellow hair as he pumped with the other. Then he rinsed his hands one at a time and wiped them on his overalls before he went in the back door.

The house was hot and hummed with flies as Ma Pendry slapped food into a plate. Her skin drew tight around the blue veins on her hands as she ripped off hunks of the greasy fatback. Papa quietly sat down at the head of the empty table as she slid the plate in front of him. She lifted up the butter mold and sliced off a piece of light yellow butter that was covered with milk bubbles as she put it on a biscuit.

"Ain't got no dry meat, but I reckon you'll last," she said putting the biscuit in his hand. Mama turned and stared out of the window towards the railroad tracks. She pulled the

curtain away from the window and peeled the grease stained cloth from the glass.

"Don't nobody never get off nothing around here but niggers and tramps." The light came through the glass and fell dully on her stiff gray hair.

Papa looked up from his plate, "What's the matter Mama, no news from the boys?"

"We got news all right, fine kinda news."

Papa looked at her back waiting for her to continue. "Bernard done got married up with some foreign woman. From the way he talks you'd think she was the finest kind of woman. Humph, talking like he was gonna bring her in my house."

"Lynda Coy know 'bout it yet you suppose?" he said indifferently and went back to his plate.

"She ain't no count neither. Been going out with all them draft dodgers what ain't got the guts to join up."

"You don't know for sure about that, Mama."

"Them being the only males around and her mother being such a gadabout, you can be sure of it if you ask me." Then she stopped and said, "but she ain't here nor there Bud. She'll find out soon enough. What we got to concern about is Bernard since it don't seem he knows how to handle his own affairs."

"Mama, it seems like he knows how to handle them to me; he's plenty old enough to get married. He won't be around here long anyway. They'll want to be setting up house-keeping of their own."

"You needn't think no foreign woman's gonna stay put. You forgetting what happened to Cravon's boy when he married up with that Mexican woman. Took every cent he had and he ain't heard tell of her since."

Papa pushed away from the table and wiped his mouth on his sleeve, "We'll wait and see, Mama."

"Humph, you wait, I'm gonna write him today and tell him to leave her there or he ain't coming in my house. Claiborne never got mixed up in doings such as that."

Papa walked into the front room and lit his pipe. "If one of them foreign women looked at Claiborne, she'd see some mighty fine running."

As Papa chuckled at his joke, Mama shoved all of the dishes into the sink. "Don't you make no jokes about Claiborne. He's one boy that loves his home and his folks don't have no worry that he won't be straight living."

Papa walked back to the kitchen door and said, "For a boy who loves his home he does a lot of complaining and a lot of loafing."

Papa walked across the room and tapped out his pipe in the cook stove. "Don't worry Mama, we'll get in the north side and Little Bud's acre before dark."

"Won't have a bit of sweetness left if you don't. You let Little Bud's acre go if you ain't got time to mess with him and don't you bring him home wet and muddy again tonight."

"Might as well not bring him home at all then cause no sooner than I turn my back, he's got them mules leading them in the pond." Then Papa laughed quietly and said, "One spot of foam under the harness and he's stripped them down and scrubbing them."

"This Ma shouldn't expect a grown man to put up with him all summer. Oughta keep him in and make him play with Nettie, but I can't stand all that noise around the house." Then she paused and said, "I raised one set of my own, no reason I should have to raise my youngin's kids. Don't know how to keep kids busy nowadays."

Papa overlooked her last remark and said, "Nettie ain't got enough size on her vet to handle him. The boy ain't that much trouble Mama. You're just in a bad humor cause of Bernard. I would have rather he'd a married up with one of them girls around here but what's done is done."

"I'll see how done it is!" and Mama kicked open the

back screen and threw the dish water off the porch. As the water splattered on the ground, the chickens clucked and squawked, then started squeaking and scratching in the wet dirt. As Mama hung the pan up on the porch, the pigs climbed to their feet and waddled slowly from the shade to wallow in the wet dirt. Mama walked back into the kitchen and Papa stood near the front door.

"Here comes Little Bud with his load, I gotta go meet him at the barn." He slammed the front screen and popped Maude on the rump. As she moved forward into her harness, the trees began to rattle and scattered drops hit the dusty ground.

Chapter 11

As Ma Pendry's feet ran through a hole in the carpet, the loose threads caught the snags and callouses on her feet and made a steady scraping sound as she rocked. Spread across the arms of her chair and dipping into her lap was a patchwork strip of colored triangles and squares that leaned in all directions to meet the edges of the scraps she sewed in.

"Green, Nettie. No, Honey, not that silky thing, it'll wear through here in the middle in no time."

Little Bud walked to the edge of her chair and spread a piece of flowered green cotton across her lap. She lifted it up and cut it into a triangle and put the scraps into his hand. As she lowered her head and picked up her needle, the wrinkles in her neck rolled on top of each other and her bristly chin rested against her chest. She wiggled eight stitches on the needle then lifted her hand across her shoulders as the white thread slipped through. As she flattened the cloth, Nettie brought her a dotted satin scrap, the remnant of a seamstress from town that loaded a box of scraps monthly for Little Bud's mother to bring Ma Pendry.

A hollow whistle sounded through the house as the morning freight crossed the road three farms below. As the whistle sounded again and the rumbling and hissing grew louder, Ma Pendry looked up and watched the face of the clock until the gold-rimmed door popped open. The mules in the side corral ran beside their fence and brayed and snorted at the train. As the train ran parallel with the house, the steady caw of the crows at the edge of the woods faded and the gold-rimmed door of the clock went back and forth against the face. The needle in her fingers stopped and her eyes turned to the clock door, gazing steadily at its swing. As she looked past the clock to the checkcloth curtains with the green of the fields and spring trees showing between, she felt the movement of the children in the scraps at her feet. Behind the green fields a row of brick red and black segments moved quickly, disjuncting as the flat cars passed below the level of the tobacco stalks and trees, then beginning anew the brick red and black segments. The locks between the cars banged up and down as the train passed over the rough stretch of track where the rails settled in the marsh on the north side.

Ma Pendry's eyelids lowered and the yellowish-white of her eyes shone and filled with water that stayed inside the lid. As she watched the train, the caboose, looking like a little red house being dragged behind the train, passed across the window, its red glowing behind the green trees. Ma Pendry watched the green trees—still—straight. She had stood at the old spring when she was young before the trees had come up and watched the morning freight pass by. Each morning she had stood in her bonnet and work dress, barefoot in the marshground, the mud rising around her feet, and waved to the engineer who always looked for her young face in the field, then lifted his hand, white against the black engine, and tooted the top whistle with a white puff of steam. As the cars went by, she would turn away quickly, for in the cattle car doors the tramps sat with dirty hands and crossed legs dangling from the doors, shouting at the girls in the fields.

Her feet had been in the soft mud at the edge of the spring, the train had whistled below the farm and its black cloud rose above the trees before the engine was in sight. Her empty water buckets had fallen with soft clangs at her side as she freed her hands. The black engine had pulled slowly up the grade, rolling thick black smoke across the tops of the cars. As she looked to the window of the black engine, the blue sleeved white hand had lifted up and she had waved at the figure in the dark of the engine.

The locks between the cars banged up and down, the train moved over the bog as she turned away from the jeers and laughter in the mouths of the cattle cars. Suddenly a noise louder than all the locks banging at once turned her towards the jering. As she turned, the segments jack-knifed from the tracks, grating the wheels across the tracks. The rails ripped up and yellow streaks of sparks flew up from the tracks, shooting through the red and black cars as the jering men screamed and cried in the air. Straw dumped from the cattle car doors and men and straw caught the yellow sparks and became red flames in the mouths of the cars. As the cars jerked from the track down the segmented train, the roar grew louder and louder then stopped, and the air was full of crying and the popping of the flames.

She stood in the field and heard the crying from behind her as the field hands moved forward. The flames crackled and the red and black cars glowed orange with fire spurting from every opening. As the leaning cars craked and fell to their sides, screams came through the flames and the smell of fire and burning flesh came across the fields in the black smoke. As the air grew hotter, the field hands walked back-crawl towards her feet from the fires. Black hands reached out wards but she stood facing the fire watching the black men from the openings, reaching through the flames, falling from their arms and sliding back into the fire. As she walked towards the blaze, she felt the molten cars sink into the marsh and the reaching arms fall aside into the fire. She stopped in the heat and clutched her mouth as the burnish flesh rose across her face. Her eyes ran as the heat hit her face when the flames spurted from the cars each followed by moans coming from all directions. Suddenly a great sucking noise came from the orange car in front of her, and a hollow scream from within. As she stepped back in the marsh, the scream ended and she turned her back to the heat. The heat stung her back and her clothes burned her skin as she stood looking into the face of a man who had been behind her. His mouth was open and his blue shirt hung over his shoulders like a rag burned black in spots. As she looked at the blue rag on his chest, she saw that it stuck in his skin and the black spots were on his chest. His blue sleeved arm hung at his side and the hand hung from it—black and red—the white hand that waved—back—black and red—back—run back—the spring—fill the buckets—the workers in the fields—they need water—water—the sun is hot—hot—water them—white leaves are dry—water plants—he is peeling them in his little hands—little white hands—he doesn't like white leaves—oh, leave them—child, leave them—they will fall themselves—they are dead.

As she watched the child by the green vine of leaves, he moved in front of the window and lifted the glass. He put the dead white leaves from the mantle plant in a row on the sill and stooped to his knees, blowing them into the yard. He put his head through the window, and laughed as the chickens ran to the leaves and pecked at their limp white bodies.

"Stupid old chickens, I seen Jimson feed his BB's, Mama, and they ate them. Chicken's ain't got good sense."

Ma Pendry sat stiffly in the chair, clutching the arm rests as she watched the little boy crawl back into the scraps and pull a feed sack over Nettie's head. She laughed and banged at the inside of the bag with her fists. Suddenly she gave a hollow little scream beneath the bag. Ma Pendry shoved the

quilt from her lap and walked into the kitchen raising her hand to her cheeks. Little Bud snatched the bag from Nettie's head who blinked her eyes as she saw the light of the room again and giggled at him as he crawled away from her under the patchwork that Ma Pendry had dropped to the floor.

Chapter III

Little Bud dropped a crumb in the path of the zigzagging ant who bumped into the crumb, backed away, and went around it. The black spot climbed over the white grains of sand and fell back in line. The line moved under leaves, over rocks, and disappeared into the hole. The file went in and out bumping noses and bumping the bread crumb.

"You keep watching close, Nettie, they get it and take it in that hole yonder."

Nettie put her fingers in front of the ants and felt them tickle her skin as they climbed over.

"Now you watch Nettie, or you gonna miss it. It's ten times bigger than him but he can pick it up. Papa says if we was as strong as him, we could pick up a train engine."

Nettie looked up in amazement and said, "You mean a real one?"

"Sure I mean a real one. Now you look, Nettie," he said impatiently. "See him pick up that crumb." Little Bud bent his head over to watch the ant who dragged the crumb to the ant hill, crawled in, and pulled the bread in behind him. Then Little Bud saw a bare foot with a big toe that went up and down flipping sand into the ant hill.

"Now you watch how quick them old fellers get that dirt outa their house," as Jimson laughed and watched the ants carry out the dirt. Little Bud looked up at Jimson, the taller of the two, who shoved his dirty hair back from his eyes as he watched the ants. His jeans hung looped in an occasional belt notch and exposed his skin below the belt.

"Didn't even hear you come up, Jimson."

"Guess you didn't with your nose in that old ant hill. I yelled for you to come over to the house. Didn't you hear me?"

"Nope, guess I didn't."

"I wanted you to come over and see the chickens Pa kilt. Have you ever seen one running round 'out his head?"

Little Bud shook his head, "No, that don't sound too good to see to me."

"Heck, you don't know till you seen it," he said as he stooped beside Little Bud. "You stretch them old fat hen's necks cross the chopping block, then hack!" and his fist went down against his knee, "and the heads plop off."

Nettie closed her eyes and pressed her fists in them as Little Bud watched Jimson gesturing with his hands as he talked.

"Then you set that old headless chicken on the ground and jump back cause when it starts running, guts get thrown everywhere."

Little Bud shivered and looked back at the ants who still moved back and forth into the hole.

Jimson shoved his arm and said as he looked up, "You know what guts I mean, them that come outa his neck and are all bloody and red . . ."

Nettie screamed and ducked her face into her skirt which dipped between her knees.

Little Bud looked at the little girl with her hands pressed against her ears and back at Jimson, "Betta not talk about it no more, Jimson, Nettie don't like to hear it."

"Yeah, I'll tell you later when no sissy girl ain't around."

Nettie scrambled to her feet and ran towards the porch. She stood on the bottom step and looked at the boys before she turned and ran into the house.

"Come on Buddy," Jimson said, "We ain't got time to mess with her. I gotta show you something." As he jumped up and started in the direction of his house, Little Bud stood

up slowly and began to follow him.

Little Bud said, "What you got, Jimson, something I ain't seen before."

"Yeah," and he turned away from Little Bud and looked at the cows rolling in the pond. "That old cow of yours must have lice or something."

"Aw, come on Jimson, what is it?"

"Well, you remember that old bitch cat that hangs around the barn catching mice, the old gray one?"

"Yeah, I seen her before."

"Well, she's done found some old tom and had her kittens in the mule stall."

"No kidding! Boy, I can't wait to see them," Little Bud said as he hurried up beside Jimson. "How many are there?"

"Oh, there's a bunch of them but it's hard to tell which ones ain't dead."

"Dead, what kilt them?"

"You know, old pregnant cat'll go through the fence every time with a stomach full of kittens and kill about half of them before they's born cause she ain't got the sense to know she's bigger than before."

"Oh, I forgot about that," he nodded and said as he put his hands in his back pockets. "They died like flies, huh?"

"Yeah, died like flies and she eat up about half of them." He looked towards Little Bud to see his reaction but he was walking out into the cornfield.

"Crows really got into your Pa's second seeding," he said as he lifted up the tiny shriveled plants. "They got the grain off the end of them all," he said letting the green plant fall between his fingers. "Shoulda soaked the seeds in that black stuff like Papa did."

Jimson stood with his hands on his hips and said irritably, "You can't do nothing but rescue Pa says, that stuff ain't no good after they done pulled it up. 'Sides they get up before anything, before the sun's up even, and don't even see them get it."

"Well if they eat one or two with that black stuff on them they get sick and don't want . . ."

"Would you hurry up, reason I come got you is you gotta see them quick before Pa gets time to get rid of them live ones."

"Is he gonna give them away?" Little Bud said as he walked back to the road.

Jimson looked at Little Bud and began a long forced laugh. "Give them away, you think my Pa's got time to waste giving away a bunch of cats." Little Bud didn't answer and followed Jimson through the apple trees into his yard. "Come on, they're in the back of the stable."

Little Bud followed Jimson as they stepped over the sill into the manure filled stable. He squinted as Jimson pointed to the clear straw in the corner, "See yonder they is."

Little Bud walked over and bent to his knees beside them as the mother cat leaped to her feet and stood stiff-legged in the gray mass, hissing at him. As she moved, some of the wet kittens began to squirm and some lay still.

Little Bud said, "They ain't even got their eyes open yet."

"Course not, they was just born. Pa'll get them before they do anyhow."

"We better get them dead ones out of there, huh? Ain't good for the others to be around dead ones."

"They all gonna be dead before sundown; every one of them Pa said."

"Why they gonna be dead? Ain't she got no milk?"

Jimson began to laugh again as Little Bud watched uncomfortably. Then Jimson picked up one of the dead kittens and slammed its head against the stall.

"That's what Pa's gonna do to every one of them," he said. "Pa'll throw the crushed kitten into the manure."

Little Bud looked at the tiny kitten in the manure and back against the railing as Jimson laughed. "Why does

he have to kill them?" Little Bud said, "they ain't no bigger than a mole."

"They ain't now but before long they'll be big old howling tom cats and we ain't got no need for them fighting and yelling all the time."

Jimson had stopped laughing and now he stared at Little Bud. "I'll call you when Pa finds time to do it. I gotta go feed up now," he said hurriedly.

"Can I have them, Jimson? I'll take all of them."

"Yeah, you'll take all of them all right and Ma Pendry will send you back with them like them mutt puppies you took and they looked just like her old dog. I'll call you, huh, when Pa gets ready to get them, O. K.?"

"Sure, O. K.," and Little Bud followed Jimson out of the stall, turning away from him outside and heading back to the road.

* * *

Little Bud sat on the end of the pier rolling down the cuffs of his pants and watching the dirt slide over his feet and dissolve in the water. His toes broke through the top of the water, making huge white mounds to the fish below that dived and raced at them. He jerked his feet out of the water and scratched his toes on the edge of the pier.

Late day illuminated all the green around the pond that began to crawl with night life and glow with night flies. In the center stake of the pond a tiny silent bird lit, and moved only its head as it watched the bugs buzz out across the water. Then with a cry, it lifted its black wings and rose into the air. As it swooped by Little Bud, blood red glowed beneath its black feathers. Its flight stopped an instant in the air then it dived silently downward to the top of the water, up again, and back to the center post.

Little Bud's skin began to sting in spots as the cool night air stirred up the mosquitoes. Dragon flies batted against his face until he buried it in his hands. As he pressed the palms of his hands into his eyes, he could hear only the night sounds of the frogs and bugs as they cried to each other across the water. Then the water sounds grew louder as they mixed with a human voice.

His name screamed across the water and fell softly back at him from the other side of the pond. He looked to the top of the hill and saw Jimson behind the thin stalks of the day lilies. He ran through the grass to meet him and stopped beside the flower stalks. The day lilies were twisted shut and felt sticky to his hands as he peeled them open without looking downward.

"He's ready, huh?"

Jimson smiled and shifted his weight to one foot. "Yeah, he's been ready. Why didn't you answer me before."

"First time I heard you."

"Well, come on, Pa ain't got all night. Says he don't see no sense in your coming anyway, that it ain't nothing pretty to watch," as he turned toward his house with Little Bud following him.

The boys ran into the yard and crawled through the pasture fence. They slowed down as they saw Jimson's Pa beneath the shade tree where the cows had laid during the day.

"We're here, Pa, you can go ahead." Craven turned without speaking and stared into Little Bud's face. He shook his head and reached into a cardboard box beside him. As he lifted the blind kitten it raked his hand with its tiny claws.

"Little feller's scratching his heart out and I can't even feel it."

He stepped towards the tree and gripped the kitten by its hindquarters. Then he swung the kitten's head into the side of the tree. The little feet pointed downward and the body fell limp in the center.

As he looked up he saw Little Bud's eyes shining in the dull light when the kitten slid from his hand. Then he turned

suddenly into the face of Jimson who laughed aloud and handed him another kitten.

"You think I enjoy this boy, smashing something what can't fight back." He grabbed Jimson's collar and pulled him towards him. "You kill one, boy; see what a big man you feel like then?"

Jimson grasped the squirming kitten and flung it against the tree trunk. It rolled down the trunk and lay on its back with its legs moving slowly. His father quickly grabbed the limp body and smashed its head against the tree.

"Just busted him up, made him hurt longer," he said looking at the little body. He lay it beside the other and stooped to pick up his shovel. As he heard Jimson run up the pasture, he handed the box to Little Bud.

"Dump them in the stall on your way back."

Little Bud watched him lift two shovels of dirt then turned to follow Jimson.

Cravon picked up the little bodies and laid them in the bottom of the hole. He sifted the dirt over them until they were hidden from his eyes, then he lifted the clay-streaked clumps of dirt and grass and shook them from the shovel. He stomped the ground flat with his foot and rolled a rock over the grave to keep the dogs from scratching it open.

Jimson stopped beside the barn and looked at Little Bud who was close behind him. The mother cat walked in and out of the stall, looked at the boys, and screamed impatiently and slowly turned to go back in the stall. Little Bud watched her go off to the corner and circle around the dent in the straw. Then she placed her paw on the dead kittens, rolled them over and over, then lifted it away quickly. As Little Bud started walking backwards, the light he was blocking slid in and ignited her eyes into two orange balls. She screamed again at him, as he laid the box on its side in the stall.

"Come on Little Bud, lets get up to the house before Pa gets back. He's madder than heck."

They walked towards the house and turned to see Cravon walk into the barn with the shovel. The beagles howled and crawled up their wire as they walked towards the back stoop. Cravon's wife stood inside the screen with her wet hands going up and down on the side of her apron.

"Ma, can I eat kinda quick, Pa's fretted at me."

"What you done Jimson?"

"Tried to kill one of them kittens but I didn't hit him hard enough and Pa got mad."

"Come on and wash up. Little Bud, your grandma's been calling you. You better get on home."

"Yessum."

Jimson slid behind his mother through the screen door. As it banged Little Bud jumped and started running towards the road.

As Jimson's mother turned and went in, her voice muffled behind the door. "Jimson, that boy ain't got the heart to see something like that. What did you take him down there for?"

"He wanted to go, told me to call him." Little Bud stopped as he heard Jimson's voice then started down the road towards home. He rubbed the sand that still hung in the night air from his eyes. The dust was hot and sifted into the air making it smell dry and hot. He heard Ma Pendry beating on the wash tub on the porch and shivered when he heard her mixing spoon grate across the rusty bottom. Then she stopped and there was no sound in the air but the slowly raising and falling scream of the night bugs. Little Bud stopped suddenly as a dusty frog plopped in the dust before him. It stood still a second then hopped away into the grass on the other side. But Little Bud didn't move and looked towards the grass where it had silently disappeared. The July flies screamed louder as the silent frog hopped through them and they buzzed and hissed through the air. Suddenly Little Bud felt a sting on his cheek and heard the body fall at his feet. It screamed louder and louder and its legs sprawled and kicked

in the dust. Little Bud watched it scound and slid his toe over it and felt its feet hit the bottom of his heel as its scream increased. He straightened his knee and his heel crushed into the squirming bug that mashed to sticky blood and a sharp and splintered frame. He lifted his heel and buried it into the dust. Then he fell into the dust and scratched the dirt and blood away that stuck to his foot.

He looked into the spread-out body and saw the disoriented legs kick slowly from the mass. In the hot air he could feel how tomorrow's sun would come up and the body would kick slowly as the ants teamed through it, dragging bits of meat and blood back to their hole. The body would slowly disappear until the legs could not move and would fall aside and dry in the sun.

His eyes felt hot as he watched the bug still moving in the dust. Crush it and crush it until the ants couldn't find it. Spread it under the dust. Hit it again like the squirming kitten with the sticky bloody head and kicking legs until it was dead and hide it with dirt. As he pushed dirt towards it he felt the jagged frame hit his skin and he jerked back as the legs kicked faster. He scraped up handfuls of dust and poured it on the bug until it moved no more. He sifted it through his hands until the black body was not on the hot sand.

Then the tub clanged on Mama's porch and the bugs screamed at him from all around. He stood up in the crying air, looking at the sky that was dark and red streaked. As he looked back at the bug's mound, the legs kicked away whiffs of dust and the black tried to move the white. He thought of moving; moving below dirt, half alive, pushing, kicking at dirt—trying to uncover itself, trying, pushing it away from its body that still lived, under dirt, kicking like the half dead kitten, kicking, kitten, kicking at dust, dirt, wet dirt, wet heavy dirt, too heavy, like the bug, can't move it, the kitten.

He started to run back to Jimson's house but the tub clanged on the porch. He must run to the house by the screaming beagles, to the barn, tripping and falling in the half dark. The mother cat would scream now and paw at the dead kittens in the barn. They were dead; they were always dead. He ran to the fence, dropped and slid under, and ran through the pasture to the tree. The air smelled of earthworms, of wet dirt. The mound was there somewhere and the earthworms had found it. They would crawl and eat the flesh tonight, while the legs kicked and stopped. He crawled around the tree and his hands touched the wet dirt. The top was a rock that he shoved away before he pulled away the dirt. Digging into the dirt, he felt the clay stick at his nails and his flesh could feel it crawling with earthworms in the night while the kittens kicked. The wet dirt became sticky earth and he raised up a body, then another, but there were no more. He held the kittens in one hand but at the bottom of the hole there was only their blood in the dirt. As he laid the bodies on the ground, he watched the legs that fell to one side as he rolled them. They rolled like the ones in the barn, the dead ones the mother cat rolled. He touched their feet and lifted the legs but they fell limply back and were still. As he raised one close to his face in the dark, it spilled through his hand and fell against his leg in the dark.

Little Bud laid the bodies back at the bottom of the hole and carefully pushed the dirt in and set the grass clumps. As he rolled the rock, his eyes sent fast drops down his cheeks. He sat still and the night became still and the flies were distant now.

He sat in a circle of stillness as he heard the tub ring above the flies. The house and the tub were at the end of the flies and he must run through the dark and not listen. Mama would not come for him; she would not leave the house in the dark. He stood and ran into the pasture and his stillness moved beside him through the howling beagles and the flies. He was in the yard and did not stop running until he was on the porch where Ma Pendry grated the tub bottom with

the spoon.

"Where you been, boy? Papa and me didn't know what had come of you," she said as she dropped the dripping spoon to her side.

"Over at Jimson's Mama."

"You get on in and wash up that face in the dish pan. Has he fought you again, coming in with your face all red and cryin'."

Little Bud slid into his seat and put his feet on the dog's back. "Where's my plate Mama?"

"In the oven, turnips probably harder than a rock now they been warming so long. Get you a biscuit off top and I'll fix it for you while you get settled."

"Where's Papa?" he said as he handed her the biscuit.

"Out fastenin' up the chickens."

"He don't like it much after dark, does he?"

"Don't nobody, I guess like it, what's up to any good," she said. As she pushed open the door and threw out the scraps, the dog trotted from under the table and slid through the crack in the door.

Chapter IV

The porch hummed with flies as Ma Pendry rocked in her wrought iron chair and skidded her feet back and forth on the gritty floor. She had taken off her shoes and Sunday hat but the heavy colored-glass pin on her dress thumped against her breastbone as she rocked. Her dress was nylon and thin, and her underclothes straps lay criss-crossed with one stray strap hanging from her sleeve.

Little Bud sat with one leg over the porch edge and watched her scoop the flies from her apron lap and hold her hand clasped shut. Before she had fixed dinner she had put the apron over her dress and bits of food still clung to it.

"That's eight Mama, you got eight."

"Seven, I seen him when he flew."

Then the old woman sat motionless except for her swinging feet and looked at her lap. Her eyes were brown and red, speckled with yellow, and drooped at the corners into wrinkles that ran down her face. They looked at the flies from behind a milky glaze that spilled into the corners. As the flies hit against her face, she twisted her flat nose and laughed with her mouth clamped shut. Then her hand swished across the polka-dotted nylon and the flies in her hand buzzed against her palm.

"Got him, Mama, I seen you get him, right off your knees."

As she smiled, and held her hand in front of her, her drooping mouth leveled. Then she held her hand in front of her nose letting the sweat-covered flies slip out through the cracks she made between her fingers and pinched away their wings. As she dropped them on the floor, they tumbled and rolled, finally crawling up against the wall.

"They don't never grow no more wings do they, Mama?"

"No honey, they don't fly no more. But they ain't no good. My Pa used to say, ole Noah woulda left us with a finer world if he had swatted those two flies and mosquitoes and stomped them two spiders when he had them right there on the Ark."

As Little Bud laughed, Papa moved his hat forward and pushed his feet up to the ledge on the porch pillar. His tie was pulled loose from his collar and lay spread open on his chest, two buttons above his belt. Little Bud ran across the porch and pulled Papa's hat down around his face, then disappeared laughing off the edge of the porch.

Suddenly Mama stood up and looked across the tracks of the highway. The bus had stopped at the end of the street. "I bet none of the niggers ever rode on Sunday, it must be someone coming to the farm."

"Pa get up," he raised his hat and looked at her. "Ma, she gonna cut them trees like I told you, great minded

to do it myself, can't see who's coming till they're halfway here."

"It's a nice little crop of trees, need some shade around the spring," he said as the hat tipped forward again.

Mama was down the steps and under the yard trees but she couldn't see around the crook in the road because of the spring trees. Then two massive figures with packs on their backs came around the curve in the road. Mama squinted at the two figures, one with a navy tie flapping around his neck. his neck.

"Papa, the boys are coming up the road!" she screamed at the porch.

Papa stood up and walked down the steps to Mama who rolled her hands into her apron as the wind blew the nylon dress between her legs. As she stood with her feet flat and apart in the dust, her glazed eyes began to rim in red. Her helpless mouth turned up as she recognized the shoe-footed walk of Claiborne, who let down his bag from his shoulders and dragged it in the dust. Slowly the smile faded as a short, figure slipped from behind the two men and was wrapped under Bernard's arm. The figure's clothes were loose and thin, and clung to her body as the wind blew through them.

Ma Pendry dropped her apron as she turned her eyes away from them and headed back to the steps.

"Tell Claiborne to come on in the kitchen and get a bite." Then she paused on the top of the steps: "And give Bernard permission to use the wagon to move his things from the house."

As the boys came in the yard they saw only Papa. Bernard grabbed the hands of the thin, brown figure that stood with his lips apart and with his eyes swollen with tears.

"Papa, you look well," Papa said mechanically as the old man trembled in his hands. Claiborne grabbed Papa's light hand from Bernard and shook it, quickly handing the limp fingers back to Bernard.

"Papa," Bernard spoke again as the old man stood with his lips helplessly opened. "Papa, this is my wife, Janah," he paused and said, "We were married in London."

Papa nodded at the stocky little woman as she stepped from behind Bernard for her introduction. Then she drew close to his side clutching his arm and looking up into Papa's face. Her loose shirt tail and flat heels blew around her body and her stomach made a mound beneath the shirt.

Papa looked into her face and said, "It's a nice place to bring up a child around here, don't have to worry about him much."

She smiled and held Bernard tighter as she nodded at Papa. Papa frowned and said, "Mama wants you two to set up near here but don't think there's room in the house."

Bernard raised his chin and said, "I figured she'd be that way since she didn't write and all. Mama has a funny idea about her children marrying." Then he paused and looked at Claiborne, "but I never much was her child anyway." Claiborne wheeled and started walking towards the house. He went around the house through the dried petunias to the back steps. He pushed the screen away and walked into the kitchen.

"Hello Mama."

"When is it a man don't come in the front door of his own house."

"I figured you'd be back here in the kitchen, Mama."

"Reckin' so, don't seem I ever get out of it." She was dragging the dinner dishes through the pan and stacking them crisscrossed in the tray.

"How you been, Mama?"

"Not much."

Claiborne walked over and ran his fingers down the chipped dishes. "Dirty as ever. Mama, it wouldn't hurt you to wash the grease out of them."

Her pace never slackened as she drove the dishes through



the brown and sudless water. "You had anything solid today?"

"No, but I'm not hungry," he said sneering at the scattered plate-covered bowls on the table and the biscuit plate humming with flies.

"Well, you just set yourself down and turn your back if your stomach's so weak and I'll see what I can scrape together—ain't hardly got enough to get by on."

Mama looked up as she heard voices coming from the front room and turned quickly back to the jumble of pans on the stove. They wobbled as she set them back on the burners and grease ran down the sides from where she had poured the food over into the plate. The hot burners sizzled as the grease dripped in, filling the kitchen with a burning odor.

Papa stepped backwards in the door as the smoke from the burners floated out. Then he said softly, "Mama, this is Bernard's new wife, Janah from London." Mama looked over her shoulder at the stubby little woman and quickly turned back to the pans saying, "Where they plan to stay?"

"We got room here for them Mama until they find a place."

"The tenant house on the crick side is vacant, no use setting up twice."

Bernard walked over to Mama, "Haven't changed a bit have you. I don't know who ever made you think you were lord and master over every living soul but you ain't. I got a right to stay under my own roof until I get ready to leave and I ain't gonna live in no tenant house like no nigger." Then he paused and said, "Papa should have the say anyway." He turned to Papa who looked at the back of Mama's head. "And if you had any common decency you would have spoken to Janah."

Mama sat the plate in front of Claiborne who was pressing dents with his knife in the soft butter. As Mama took the knife from him, she looked at Bernard saying, "You had your say?"

"No, I ain't finished. Janah and I gonna raise our family and live as far apart from you and your ways as we can get and from now on don't count on no Sunday visits except to see Papa once in a while, in fact," he added looking at the back of the old woman's head who had turned back to her pans. "In fact, we don't plan to speak."

Ma Pendry stacked the wet dishes and walked to the shelf. Bernard watched her as she shuffled across and slid the dishes in, grating their access the grit on the shelf. She pulled out a chair at the end of the table and sat down facing Claiborne. Bernard looked from Claiborne to Mama but neither of them looked up. As Janah pulled his arm, he moved her back to his side and gazed into her face.

He took her by the arm and as they went out the door, muttered to Papa that he would move in the tenant house until they could find a place and that he would borrow the mule and wagon and have them back before sundown.

Papa walked back into the kitchen and looked at Mama, "Just like you, one thing and they're not flesh and blood no more. He's right about lord and master; this won't never my house if you're speaking about having the say."

Papa watched Mama pour the extra food into the bowls on the table and slide the plates back over them. Then she sat back down and put ham and butter into a biscuit and dropped it under the table for the dog. As she wiped her hands on her side, she said to Papa, "You know it won't my boy I was throwing out, he's welcome to come back soon as he finds out what kinda woman he's got." Then she frowned and said, "Pshaw, wouldn't doubt a minute it won't someone else's youngin she's a carryin' pouched out so far already."

"Well, I'm a telling you one thing this time Mama, that ain't coming back with or without no woman. You get that seed set on them coming home, and it ain't five minutes I've run them out." Then he looked at her, "Did it that much, your not getting to choose her." Then Papa

left the room and the springs creaked as he sat down in the chair in the front room.

Mama looked at Claiborne who was wiping his plate with his biscuit. "Get enough?"

He nodded and wiped his mouth on his sleeve. "Ain't changed a bit, still cooking all the juice out of everything. If it won't for your biscuits, you'd get throwed out of the kitchen."

Mama leaned back in the chair and looked at the calendar on the wall. The months had all been ripped off and all that remained were two staples and a glossy print of the ski lifts in Switzerland.

"Tell me Claiborne, ain't home better than them foreign countries?"

"You know I didn't get to no countries Mama, I didn't never leave Cape May. It was Bernard who parachuted into France and London."

"His name ain't got no place here now Claiborne, you remember that."

"He ain't been gone more'n two minutes."

Mama still gazed at the picture. "How come you and him happened to come in together?"

Claiborne looked at her a second and pushed away from the table. "I run into them at the beach, they was honey-mooning 'fore they came home."

"What beach?"

"I don't know what beach, you ain't never been to none of them anyway." He paused and said, "Some beach we got a ride to, I don't remember the name."

"You don't remember the name, huh, out running around with those sailors and them women that hangs around there."

"No women interested in me, I mostly just sat on the board walk wall and drank a few beers."

"Them women interested in anyone they thinks got money to spend on them. Like that little snip of Bernard's, they're the same in London as," and her voice trailed off as she looked to see if Claiborne had heard her. He was looking at the ski lift picture as she walked to the door and kicked open the screen throwing the slops off the porch for the pigs. As the slops splattered on the ground, the pigs squealed and Mama banged out the pans on the porch. Mama watched the pigs snort and root in the yard as Claiborne got up from his seat to move away from the sounds.

Chapter V

Green scum lay across the pond water now as the pollen flaked down from the trees and floated onto the surface. The wind and the fish swirled the yellow-green labyrinth that wound around the rushes into strings of bubbles. Tiny spiders with sacs on their feet bounced across the surface and as the fish broke through, scattered across the circle of ripples. The water muddled around the edge as the tadpoles rolled over and settled back to the bottom.

Above the pond the tobacco fields lay stripped of their large leaves with suckers wrapping the jagged stalks with tiny green leaves. Smoke settled low across the fields in the damp morning air as the last leaves were fired. Inside the pack house, the tenants tied the wrinkled yellow leaves to the sticks and piled them against the wall.

Little Bud heard the sticks rattle against the wall as he watched Papa nail a yellow and black sign to the corn crib. As his hammer missed, he knocked paint chips up on the metal and smoothed them back with his finger.

"*One Hundred Bushels of Corn Club*," Little Bud read. Then he looked at Papa and smiled. "Jimson's Pa didn't get one Papa, in fact he said he didn't know of no one but you."

Papa looked at the dented sign and said, "His seedings weren't right with the moon and he soaded too heavy." Then Papa looked through the wire into the crib. "Three good ears to a stalk; you gotta watch out Little Bud or it'll all go to

stalk and won't have cars no size."

Little Bud shook his head and said, "Can I look inside again before we leave?"

Papa smiled and nodded as he opened the new lock on the crib. Little Bud climbed inside and felt the cars grate and roll beneath his feet as the loose grains hit the tin bottom of the crib. He jumped back to the door frame as the mice began to drop from the wire above onto the corn and disappear between the cars of corn.

"Got a hole to plug up somewhere, more than one I reckon. Put the cat in to get them and she got out." He lifted Little Bud from the crib door and said, "I'll get you started at the minnow pond and then I'll come back and start patching, reckon it'll take half the day."

Little Bud and Papa started down the path to the pond and stopped suddenly as Nettie came bounding up behind them.

"Papa, Papa!" she yelled and stopped short before him.

Papa looked at her and said, "What's the matter Nettie?"

As she stammered and swung her hands behind her back, her eyes rolled upward in search of something to say. Then they brightened as she said, "Can I go with you?"

Papa smiled as he reached down for her hand and led her beside him down the path. As she stopped suddenly and looked straight before her eyes, Papa felt a silky tickle on his hand.

Stooping down to her he said, "Just an old writing spider, Nettie. He makes a fancy web but he ain't got no bite." The yellow and black spider slid up and down drawing the middle of his web tighter with zigzag strokes. The center was tangled with dry wings and legs which he kicked from the web as he wound their bodies with white thread. As he tugged on the bodies, water drops fell loose from the thread and scattered across Nettie's face. As the spider moved back to his zigzag writing Little Bud said, "Jimson told me that when he writes your name, he's carving your tombstone and that you're gonna die."

Nettie stepped back from the web and wiped the water from her face. Papa laughed and lifted her to his hip. "That's a lot of stuff Jimson's been telling you. That old spider don't even know your name."

Nettie said, "Well, I'm not gonna tell him mine." Papa and Little Bud laughed at the little girl and led her around the web towards the fish pond. As they came through the brambles to the clearing around the pond, the frogs jumped in with a funny, hollow sound and made muddy circles in the green scum. The circles began to close slowly, but the scum broke in spots across the pond as the frogs came up.

"I'll turn the valve for you, Little Bud, and you just keep it unstopped and do as you like about the fish."

"Jimson's coming over with his scine and bucket Papa, and we are gonna save all we can for his fish pond."

"Well, what you don't save throw on the bank and we'll bury them but don't leave any of them in puddles. One bass could clean out every minnow we stock in there."

"Yesir, we'll watch out for them."

"And you watch out for Nettie too, don't let her fall in. If she gets in your way, send her up to the house."

The little girl was on her knees at the water's edge breaking the scum with her fingers and watching the bull frog tadpoles roll over in the mud. "You tell her to stay back, Papa, she'll listen to you."

Papa nodded and told the little girl to stay close to the bank. As he started up the path, he met Jimson with his scine and his bucket. The scine was rolled up over his shoulder and the corks bobbed up and down as he walked.

"Hey, Mr. Bud!"

"Hey, Jimson," then Papa looked at the scine a second and said, "Let me borrow this a minute, Jimson," and walked up the path to the spider web. He watched the spider go up

and down then smashed down the web. As the spider ran dizzied and panicked on the ground, Jimson walked up and said, "He was about right for Nettie's hair, huh?"

"Yeah," said Papa, as he handed the scine to Jimson. "Gotta go fix the crib, no mice gonna mess up this crop."

Jimson laughed and said, "Pa said it ain't been done around here since he can remember and said folks were mighty proud of you, Mr. Bud."

Papa laid his hand on Jimson's shoulder then turned and went up the path. Jimson began running to the pond with the bucket banging against his side.

"Hey, Little Bud, has the water gone down much yet?" Then he stopped looking at the water level and the fat frogs sitting in the shallow water at the edge. "We can get started soon; this ain't a deep pond no how. You can touch half way out."

"That'll make it easier with the scine," Little Bud said as he walked up from behind the dam. "Nettie, you go over there to the drain and catch all the little fish that come through and put them in the bucket, O. K.?"

"O. K." and she jumped up from the edge of the water sending the fat frogs back into the water and under the bull rushes. She stumbled down behind the dam, watching eagerly as the yellow water spouted from the drain. Then a jelly-like tadpole fell out and wallowed in the mud below the drain. "Tadpoles too?" she yelled.

Little Bud yelled back, "Yeah, tadpoles too."

Jimson said, "Pa don't want the place overrun with bullfrogs, they drive him crazy at night."

Little Bud said, "Let her catch them, she won't get many when she finds out how they feel and it'll keep her out of the way."

Jimson nodded and began to unroll the scine on the bank. "I think I got all the holes patched. Pa messed it up in that old snaggy pond of ours."

"Yeah, but I don't see none now."

The water level was beginning to lower faster and the brown mud shone around the edge. The green scum settled on the bottom as the water went out from under it. After the boys rolled up their pants and picked up the scine, they walked across the mud and scum to the water, pressing it on the bottom and edging it towards the center.

"Don't let it up off the bottom now, or we'll lose the biggest ones."

"O. K. but this gooey bottom is tripping me up. Boy it feels awful."

"We better bring it up soon or we'll be out too deep to raise it."

"Now," cried Little Bud and they lifted the scine to the top. They carried it towards the shore with the center under water.

"Don't let it come all the way out yet or we'll lose the big ones." The puddle of water in the center of the scine wriggled and shone with life as they pulled it through the mud and laid it on the shore. When the water had drained through, crayfish walked on tiptoe across the net and clasped the fish in their claws. The fat frogs waddled away from them and bounced over the edge of the net as the gray-bellied tadpoles rolled lazily over and over in the water of their jelly.

"Don't let them pinchers break their scales or they won't have a chance of living." As Jimson threw the orange crayfish out of the net, some ran back across the mud and disappeared into the water, but some ran back into the net. "We'll have to stomp them." He threw them out, slinging them away from his hand as they grabbed his fingers. Little Bud leaped from one to the other and trembled as he felt them crush beneath his feet. As Jimson stepped on them he felt their shells cutting into his feet. Then he went to his knees and said, "Stand back," and he began flinging them back into the water, into the woods, and over the dam. Little Bud began to gather the fish and lay them flip-flopping into the bucket. Finally the

net was clear except for the trembling tadpoles and the almost invisible pond shrimp that lay frozen among the tadpoles. Little Bud and Jimson lifted the seine and spilled them into the mud. Then they went back to the bucket and watched the fish. They lay still for a moment with their eyes looking to the sky then they would flip and their spotted and red bellies would catch the sunlight before they fell back into the "We got a bunch first time," Jimson said, "Won't get as many next time cause they're getting wise." Then they heard Nettie crying from behind the dam. Little Bud ran to the top and saw the little girl surrounded by the yellow crawfish that crawled towards the stream spurting from the dam. Little Bud ran and lifted her up saying, "They aren't gonna hurt you, Nettie, they just want the water." Then he looked at the huge mass of crawfish and said, "Did them all come through the drain?"

Nettie sniffed and said, "They come flying in the air and everywhere."

Then Little Bud laughed as he carried her away from them, "That was just old Jimson going wild throwing them out of the net. They was pinching the scales off his fish."

Nettie frowned as he sat her down beside the water, "You said they wouldn't hurt nobody," she said skeptically.

"They won't hurt nobody but let them fish get out here where they can't swim away and them old pinchers go after them."

Nettie shivered as she watched the crawfish move across the mud. Then she jumped up and ran to watch the fish in the bucket.

"Little Bud, we done let the water get near 'bout gone. We'll never get the most of them if they get left on the mud."

Little Bud looked across the pond and saw the shiny fish get mud-coated and heavy and flip slowly in the bog. He filled his hands with brown water from the puddles near the edge and sprinkled it on the fish in the bucket. Then he and Jimson scooped up the seine and hurried to the center where the big muddy puddle lay teaming with fish. The crawfish cuddled in the scum and worked their bodies below the surface moving to pull the helpless fish under. Little Bud and Jimson dipped into the water but emptied the seine and dipped again as they caught all of the weeds and trash.

Nettie stood by the bucket and watched the clean fish flipping in the bucket. Then she stared at the shiny remains of the pond, the brown mud with the green scum scattered across it like a broken web. The mud came up slowly in spots as the tired and heavy fish rolled over. The crawfish rose up from their holes and ran silently across it to the rolling masses. Then they pinched the fins and tugged the fish behind them to their holes.

Nettie walked to the edge and put her feet in the mud where the water had been. It felt soft and slick as she felt herself sink above her ankles. She began to pull her feet loose and it released them with a little suck as she moved towards the fish. The crawfish ran beside her and as she swayed away from them, she fell on her side in the brown mud. The fish were turning slowly and the crawfish were moving faster along the top as she looked across the pond. She saw a gold belly shining in the sun then it rolled over into the mud; and its gold disappeared. The crawfish moved around her like a thousand spiders in the safety of their web. Her feet would not pull out with little sucks as the mud rose above her knees. As she bent towards the fish, and reached with her hand, the gold belly shone again, rolling and catching the sunshine. The shine of the fish, the sunshine, the yellow mud as she flashed as her body fell forward into dark softness.

Jimson and Little Bud dug the heavy seine to the top of the pond and untangled the last of the fish from the mass of mud and crawfish. They stacked the fish on the bank and Jimson carried them towards the bucket he said, "Nettie, Nettie, did she run off?"

Little Bud stood and looked around the pond, "She was there just a second ago. I didn't hear her leave." Then he called her and waited for an answer. "We better look for her Jimson, I promised to watch after her."

Then Little Bud stopped at the edge of the pond and watched the yellow spiders dance across it. Near his feet he saw two tiny holes in the mud and as he raised his face he saw the straight path of Nettie. Little Bud walked slowly into the pond, pulling out his feet from the slowly crusting mud. In front of him a yellow spider danced around a dent in the scum and the yellow muddy hair. Little Bud stooped, and clasped in his hands the soft, twisted hair on the back of Nettie's head. He grasped the hair and pulled the face up as the mud sucked and moved back into place. Then her face slipped from his grip and fell back, and as he tumbled forward, Jimson grabbed his shoulder.

"Little Bud, Buddy, help me, we'll get her out," and he tugged at the body as Little Bud watched with his hands laying beside him in the mud. Jimson lifted the little body up into his arms and turn to Little Bud, "We gotta tell somebody, Little Bud," and as he spoke tears ran onto his cheeks and his lips. Little Bud rose slowly up and they walked towards the bank. Jimson laid the body gently on the bank and began wiping clean the face. Suddenly Little Bud clutched the stiff little body to his chest and bent over it.

"I'll go get Papa, don't you worry, he'll know what" and he shook his head and ran up the path.

"Papa, Papa, come quick—it's awful!" As Papa appeared at the door of the crib he looked at Jimson's face and leaped down and grabbed his shoulders shaking him backward and forward.

"What, What?"

"It's Nettie, Papa," and Jimson turned and ran towards the pond with Papa after him. Papa stopped on the bank and saw the children clutched together.

"She musta gone after a fish, we was with our backs to her and she musta just fell in the mud and died," Little Bud's eyes dropped again as he clutched the little girl tighter.

Papa walked to Little Bud and gently pulled him away from Nettie. He looked at her mud-streaked face and his head dropped as he felt her tiny stiff hand in his.

Papa raised his head and said to Little Bud, "You run tell Mama to get your mother if she can and to get a doctor from somewhere." Little Bud rose up and walked towards the path with Jimson following behind him. They brushed the open orange day lilies beside the path and left them trembling in the air.

As Papa lifted the brown child, her yellow hair hanging loose from her head, he looked down at the bucket of fish scraping scales together and flipping up and down. Tears fell to his cheeks, streaking through the corn dust, as he shoved over the bucket of fish. They slid out and flipped across the earth. Little Bud watched Papa from the top of the hill as he kicked their bodies across the earth where they rolled over in the dirt and lay flopping and drying in the sun.

Chapter VI

This fair blond child of thine oh Jesus,
our Savior, take her to your tender flock, may
her short reach to your love be not unfulfilled,
oh Jesus, let her reach your love.

Amen.

Nettie's mother was there but her father could not be found in time. Ma Pendry told her she could come back home anytime she found fitting, but she said Little Bud would stay on out the summer as planned if it was all right and maybe when school started, she'd have enough put away to bring him home with her. A boy needs to be home with his mother but if she can't provide for him, she has to sacrifice.

Ma Pendry watched her finger around the grave and look at the stone bought by her old classmates with bewilderment.

JANETTE AILDRED WHITEHEAD

1941-1945

Suffer little children and
forbid them not to come
unto me.

Matthew 19:14

The little woman walked to Ma Pendry and leaned against her side, nodding at the murmurs of the people as they filed away from the grave. She wanted to touch the stone, to feel its white coldness, as the marble hit her hand. Suddenly Nettie was gone, she would not see her, she did not exist. The trees and grass were a green blur around her and the wet air buzzed with flies; not the day for Nettie's funeral.

As Ma Pendry bent her head towards her, her dirty hat slid forward in her dull gray hair. "You stay home and rest up a spell before you go back to town." When she stood straight again, the hat slid back into place.

She spoke again, "It don't seem a right thing but we can't question." She looked up suddenly at Ma Pendry whose voice moved on the same level.

"I can question, Mama," she said cynically, "I can question the reason for taking that little thing that never hurt nobody." Then she looked at the grave and said, "If only I could find someone to blame but there ain't no way of saying." Then she stopped and said, "That's a bad thing I said," and her words trailed off, "but it ain't fair to me or anyone."

Then she looked up into the face of Little Bud who stood in front of her. He grabbed her skirt in his hands and cried, "I done it Mama, I done it, I think, but I wouldn't never have meant it."

Then his mother pulled him to her and pressed him against her stomach. "Don't you worry none, Buddie, you and me gonna get along somehow." Then her features tightened as she looked back at the grave, "Maybe we'll have another one like Nettie." As she heard her words she shuttered and buried her face in his hair.

Ma Pendry turned and walked towards the road calling, "Let's get on back, we got feeding up and supper."

The supper was without talk, but this was as always. Mama stood with her plate on the stove sopping it with a biscuit. She took a bite and broke it, dropping half on the floor with a splat. Every one looked up slowly at the dog who crawled from beneath the table and lapped it up.

Little Bud took up his plate and sat it in front of the dog. He looked up sadly at Ma Pendry and said, "I can't eat no more; my stomach don't feel so good."

The clinking of the forks stopped and all the blank faces around the table stared at him.

"I'm going out on the porch, Mama." Ma Pendry nodded and the corners of her eyes seemed to fall lower as the thin little boy walked towards the porch. Then she looked at the dog licking the linoleum at her feet and muttered, "That little feller don't know nothing about dying."

Little Bud shoved open the screen with his foot and waited a second to feel the cool air in his face. He walked onto the porch but he could still hear the sounds in the kitchen. As he pulled the wooden door together, the sounds muffled lower. He walked across the porch and saw Jimson run down the steps and stop and look in the direction of his house. Little Bud stepped quickly to the shadow behind the brick pillar and watched Jimson turn his head and start down to feed up. He heard the beagles start howling and heard the scrape of the food pan as Jimson raked out their food. He felt cold standing in the shadow, hiding from Jimson. Jimson was with him at the pond too, it was as much his fault, except she won't his sister.

As Little Bud sat on the edge of the porch, he looked at the pier legs standing above the mud. He felt as if he had done the same thing before, looking down at the pier, but he could not have. There was always water there and it had never been the night after his little sister's funeral before.

The smoke from the tobacco barns settled in flat lines across the sky as if there was an invisible barrier between its gray and the pink orange of the clouds. Rows of bent and broken tobacco stalks spread before him with their pale green suckers glowing in the dim light. Black bats and martins darted from the trees into open air, zigzagged up and down for bugs and silently disappeared. As he jumped from the porch and walked down the slope to the pond, the daylilies hit his side and swung behind him with their orange and twisted flowers falling from their cores. Suddenly Little Bud stopped and saw entangled between the thin green stems another web of the writing spider. He watched the yellow and black body making white zigzags in the center of the web.

As he watched he said, "Are you the same spider," then he stopped to hear his own words and began to laugh as the spider thickened the white letters in his web. Then he screamed, "Did you learn your lesson about building across the path." His laugh moved the bugs in the night air and they began to whirl and buzz around him. His laugh stopped suddenly as he fell to his knees in the flowers and cried with his face in his lap. He rose to his feet and looked wildly down the path to the pond. The twisted flowers reached across the path as he ran to the edge of the pond. The odor of decaying fish rose up from around his feet as he saw the scattered silver bodies in the faint light. Flies buzzed around them and lifted away their silky flesh through the red glow reflected in the skin of dew.

Little Bud ran through them and climbed onto the pier. He wiped his eyes against his sleeve as he looked out across the mud. It had dried and lay in a web of cracks. He slid off the end of the pier and felt his feet hit wetness as he broke through the crust. It rose over his feet but then the descent stopped where the mud had settled. He walked across the top towards the hole where Nettie had fallen and by Jimson's scene which lay dried in the crust.

Then he stopped and looked into the air. He had heard his name, it was a soft voice—a female voice—weak in the night air—it must call again—so he could be sure he heard it—it was far away and muffled—coming from low—coming from below the ground—Nettie—it was Nettie—she was calling him—she wasn't dead—quick—her voice was weak—she must call again—the air was silent as he ran across the crackling mud towards the graveyard. As he ran he heard the voice again, it was weaker, she was getting weaker under all that dirt.

The graveyard was dark; the trees wrapped over his head choking the light with a green glow. Little Bud ran to the edge of the mound where they had laid her coffin and he smelled the wet dirt that rose up from the grave. As he went to his knees, the white headstone blocked the last of the red glow of the clouds that seeped under the trees and his face fell into shadow. Digging into the top with his hands, he whispered to Nettie.

"You ain't dead, they ain't gonna blame me no more, we'll show them you ain't dead."

As he pulled away the packed dirt with his nails, he became afraid he would never reach her because he could not hear the voice now. He jumped to his feet and ran into the dark shed to look for the grave digger's shovel. It lay on a pile of hoes and rakes with fresh dirt matted on the blade. He stepped from the door and looked across the graves and saw only a mass of square blocks among the slanting tree trunks.

He dug away the mound and began to lift the wadded red and blue clay as he went deeper. Little Bud felt the shovel hit the wooden top of the coffin.

"I found you Nettie! I'll let you out." As he pulled the

dirt away from the top, it wobbled in the shallow grave. The shovel scraped against the sides as he raked a trench around the box. As he clutched the end of the box and dragged it from the grave the weight inside shifted to the other end of the box. He stopped suddenly as he felt the solid weight shift and let the box drop from his hands. As he slowly pulled the box up to the surface, he watched the dirt slide from the top. The top was flat and the silver heads of the nails went unevenly around the edge.

"Nettie," he whispered in the silent graveyard. His fingers pushed under the edges but the box was nailed shut. Then he sat and looked at it, rolling it over and tipping it as if it were a turtle that had drawn in its legs.

"Nettie, Nettie, you called me, I heard you, you wanta come out?" he cried as he shook the box. Then he wiped his face with his hands smearing dirt across his cheeks. "You ain't coming out, Nettie, you ain't been able to since yesterday." Then he muttered as his head dropped to his knees, "I gotta let Nettie go, I gotta let Nettie go." He put his forehead on the box and said, "Nettie ain't gonna be here no more, she's dead, it can't happen all over and be right and not happen, Nettie's dead."

It was dark and the air was noisy and streaked with moonlight. He didn't hear Ma Pendry come through the trees until he felt her heavy step behind him. He looked up into her face which was spotted with light and marked with dark creases. Her eyes did not fall and her lips didn't move as she looked at the box. As she stooped and pulled the box from his hands, Little Bud leaned back. She slowly shoved it back into the hole and stood above it with a handful of dirt. Her lips began to move at last but she made no sound as the dirt fell from her fingers onto the box. As she began to take the dirt back in, Little Bud pulled his hands back. She packed the dirt with the shovel and worked to level the mound, laboring with her square body. He felt she didn't know he was there, as she smoothed the grave in the spotted starlight and stumbled back through the trees with the shovel. The shovel crashed into the pile of tools and the door slammed shut as the chain rattled over the nail.

As he stood in the darkness, the wind stirred the trees and the light spots moved around his dark circle in the center. He was afraid to step out, afraid there was not another place of stillness and quietness. Then he felt the moving world coming to him to take away his stillness. Heavy feet began to move towards him as he stood by the grave and Ma Pendry's stiff face blurred as she entered into his circle of stillness.

He leaned back from her bulk as she said, "Come on son, we'll go home now, you've had a hard day."

Her voice was soft and had come to a level he could not remember. She took his hand and pulled him out of his circle. The air became moving and filled with voices as they crossed the tracks to the empty road home.

Chapter VII

Claiborne sat in the chipped iron chair on the porch with his feet on the pillar. In the other chair Ma Pendry sat with her hands clasping the arm rest and her feet scuffing on the grit on the floor. The dog went back and forth under her chair and raised his back to scrape it on the bottom of the chair. Then he rooted his nose under Ma Pendry's hand until her fingers fell behind his ears and scratched while he closed his eyes.

"He stinks, Mama, goes in the pond every day and still stinks."

As Ma Pendry stopped scratching the dog, he snorted and held his nose under her hand again.

"Where's Papa, Jack," and her eyebrows lifted as the dog ran to the edge of the porch and looked down the road. Then he stepped from the porch and ran to the thin figure walking and circled around it. Papa did not change his pace or look

at the animal, but walked slowly towards the house.

"Claiborne," Ma Pendry said, "Would you cut out them trees between here and the road someday so I can see Papa coming? Gotten so thick you can't even see the bus letting out and the train go by."

Claiborne watched the old man walk by the house to the crib and lift up the lock. Then he disappeared into the barn with an armful of corn.

Claiborne turned as he heard the corn roll into the feed trough and looked at the old woman with her feet on the sleek dog's back. Her legs were ridged with blue veins that moved slowly under the skin as her feet slid on the dog's back. The skin began to discolor at her calves and at her ankles became a mass of blue and purple and red.

Papa walked to the crib and pulled the dead honeysuckle vines away from his sign. Then he went to the house, nodding as he walked between them into the front room. As he passed, Claiborne rose to his feet and went around the porch to the smoke house. When he shoved open the door, the dusty cobwebs sifted at his feet and dirt dauber nests dropped on the floor inside. He started backwards as he saw Little Bud scrambling through a box of quilt scraps and photographs. Little Bud looked unmoved and said, "Look what I found in my treasure hunt, Uncle Claiborne," and he held up a large gold ring. Claiborne quickly snatched it from his fingers and flung it across the shed, shattering the globe of a kerosene lamp. Little Bud watched as the glass tinkled down across the broken furniture and fell silently onto the silver-fish caten magazines.

"That's Mama's wedding band in case you didn't know," then Claiborne paused and kicked over the box of scraps which spilt out into the floor in a jumble of sea shells he had brought her, and a broken strand of pearls that had peeled away to transparent glass. "In with the rest of the mess out in the smoke house," he said as he grabbed the ax from the corner and walked through the door.

He walked by the house and Ma Pendry watched him as he went towards the trees. He carried the ax in one hand and his massive bare shoulders moved as he walked like an animal lunging in a harness. As he went into the brambles, he swung the ax at the scrubs with one hand, lifting them into the air on both sides of him. He made his way to the trees, stopping in front of them with the ax head on the ground. His huge round face, scattered with features, twisted towards an expression then scattered again. As he swung the ax into the first tree, it rattled, dumping needles onto his shoulders. Then the ax went into the other side and the tree cracked into the brambles.

Ma Pendry walked down from the porch and Little Bud ran from the smoke house to follow her. She stood at the edge of the tobacco field and watched Claiborne's back as he moved noisily through the trees. The thick green of the trees began to gap and the spaces filled with gray-white houses and the yellow dirt of the road. The corners of her lipless mouth began to lift as her hands twisted into her apron. Little Bud walked to her side and looked up at her face and at Claiborne's back as the yellow and gray-white gap widened and the green fell. Only Claiborne's arms and the ax flew above the green now as he wavered and swayed in the mass of fallen trees.

"Little Bud, get in there and pull some of those trees away from under his feet," and she stumbled forward as she grabbed his shoulder. "Don't let none of them fall on the tracks." As she turned facing him, her eye corners fell and the brown centers glowed as she spoke, "Get in there quick before he's done," and she moved towards him with her hand outstretched and her veins bumping at her wrists. The little boy pulled backwards and held his hands together behind his back.

"No, Mama," he cried as he moved backwards. "No! You shoulda left them trees."

"They died there, my Pa plowed them under there, nobody didn't never move them from where they died," she said.

Little Bud looked at her and slid his hands into his pockets. The tramps that laughed at her, that scattered and burned across the field—turned under the soil. The black dirt had rolled up beside the plow and fallen over, and lay streaked with red clay until the grass and rushes came, then the little trees, they never planted crops there. No one came—no one questioned—they belonged to no one—they were there—they were hers—her dead.

"It's best the trees grow there Mama, and cover the ground."

"No, No!" The old woman looked wildly down the tracks. "Graves gotta be kept clear, we gotta care for their place on earth."

He looked at her square bulk against the sky; his eyes hurt as the sun seeped around her. Then as the corners of her eyes began to sink into her face and her lipless mouth began to fall, he turned and stumbled across the ditch to the road. The steady beat of the ax had stopped and the trees moved up and down as Claiborne stacked them. Little Bud turned and looked at her again, shaking his head: "Their place is in the ground, the Book says that." He looked down at his feet and said, "They, they don't stay there, it don't matter 'bout them, their soul goes to heaven, it says that, it's better there, that's where Nettie is, it's better there." Then he stopped and turned to go but spoke again, "You shouldna cut them trees, they woulda grown on if it hadna been for you."

As he turned and ran pass Claiborne to the yellow road, he felt the gray-white houses move by his eyes. The trees still moved up and down and the square bulk still stood in the field against the sun.

As he ran and stopped beside the light pole, he saw the silver mailboxes and felt air hit his face as a car went by. He held the mailbox and looked up and saw the clean black and white of the pavement. Suddenly from behind him a gray and black shadow darted across the ditch. A cat whined and the wet haired animal slid through the grass to the pavement. It moved slowly onto the highway lifting its paws on the hot pavement. As Little Bud looked in front of the cat, he saw a gray wing moving up and down; he could not tell if it was the wind or if the bird was trying to move. The wing lifted from a ruffled and dark heap of feathers that spread on the black pavement. The cat moved towards the bird, leaping back suddenly into the grass as a car rolled by leaving the wing trembling in the air.

Little Bud felt movement overhead and looked to see the soaring circle of a black buzzard that moved silently around the sky. The cat ran out again, from the grass and raked at the black heap with its paws until it pulled loose and rolled over on the pavement. Then it grasped it in its mouth and slid back into the grass and disappeared. Little Bud looked up and saw the two bulky figures of Ma Pendry and Claiborne beside the heap of green. Then the cat whined and slipped through the grass into the woods, dragging the wing of its catch. As Little Bud ran into the woods after the cat, he yelled, the cat stopped, dropping the dead bird. Little Bud walked towards the bird and the cat turned and ran through the undergrowth. He lifted the bird and smoothed its wings and gray feathers to its body. Pulling away a mat of pine straw, he dug into the soft earth and placed the little bird in the bottom of the hole and covered it over. As he looked for a rock for the top of the grave, his eyes glanced upward, but the buzzard had disappeared into the trees.

Each year CORADDI, the fine arts magazine of the University of North Carolina Woman's College, invites contributions from university campuses throughout the country. The poetry and fiction chosen for publication in this issue will be discussed by a panel of critics on March 22, 1962, at 3:30 P. M. in the Virginia Dare Room of the Alumnae House. The Nineteenth Annual Arts Forum Committee is sponsoring as panel members Jessie Rehder of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Louis Rubin of Hollins College, Virginia, and Robert Watson of the University of North Carolina Woman's College.

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